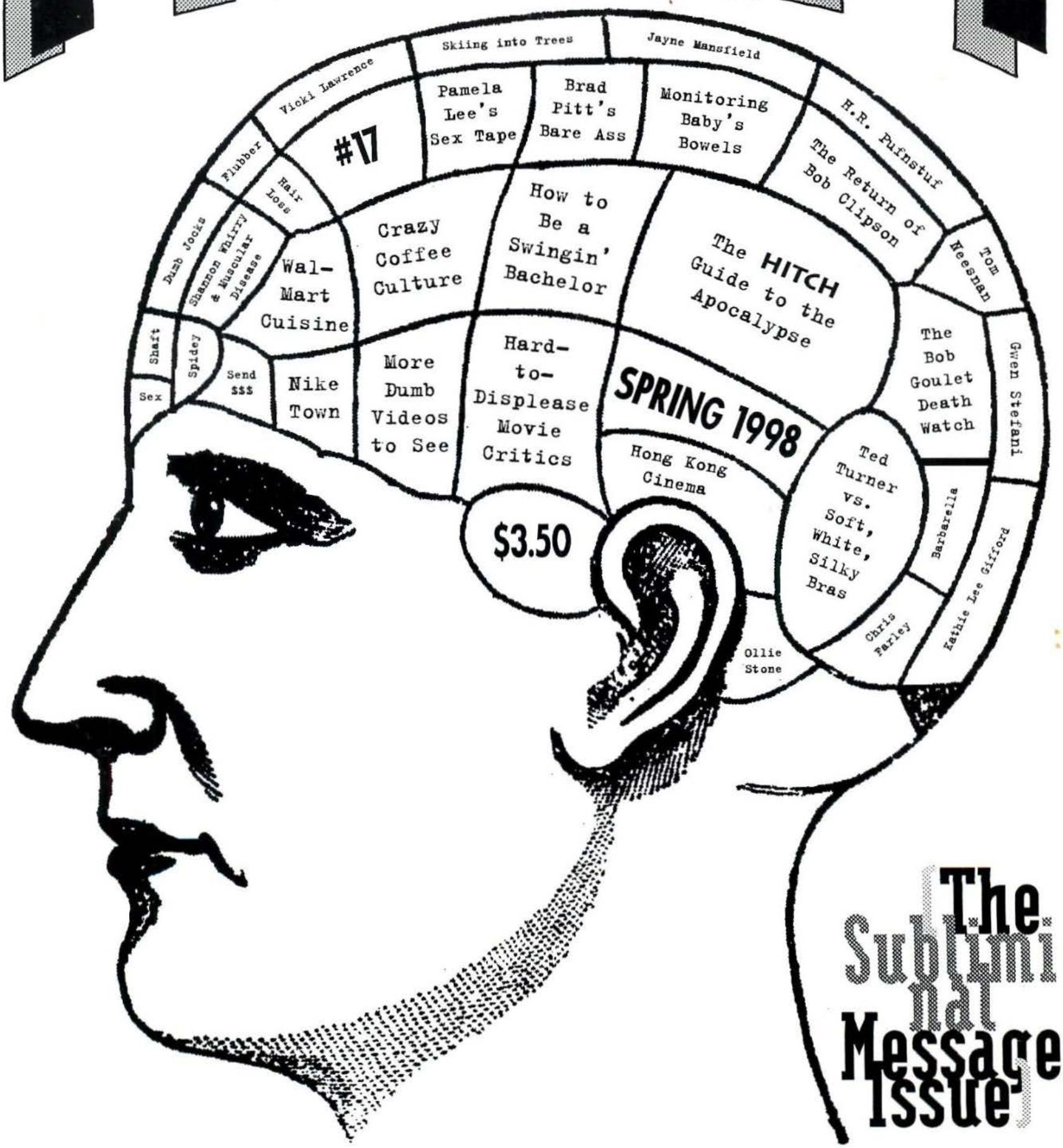
HITCH



The Subliminal Message Issue

HITCH

WITH WOOD GRAIN FINISH

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Thanks for Continued Support
Atomic Books
Something Weird Video
every record company that sends promo discs

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IN HITCH

#17 • SPRING 1998

"The truth is, I practice absurdity quite religiously."
—Alfred Hitchcock

WORDY STUFF

Apocalypse When? The HITCH Guide to the End of the World/16 Get ready for swarms of locusts, downpours of fire and lotsa hot sex! By Ryun Patterson. **"The Critics Agree!"/20** No matter how horrible a movie is, there's always *someone* who likes it. Meet Paul Wunder. By Steve Hunt. **I Never Met a Microwaved Meatball I Didn't Like/22** Testing the free, fatty wares when stuck at Sam's Wholesale Club makes the time just *fly*. By Rod Lott. **Hi Diddle Dee Dee (A Bachelor's Life for Me)/24** Babeless? Here's how to score, and score *big*, baby, with no commitments attached! By Ryun Patterson. **Won't You Take Me to Niketown?/26** I can ... puke at corporate greed at its most shameless. By Jamie Rogers. **The Eyes Have It: What Used to Be Geeky Now Gets Me Babes!/28** Does wearing glasses if you don't need 'em make you an Einstein in the superficial eyes of others? A he-man sociology experiment by Rod Lott. **Crockajoe/29** Another reason to hate *Friends*? Those six smug bastards have helped popularize this notion of coffee as the be-all end-all social beverage. Joe Rogers investigates the rest for the decaffeinated set.

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DEPARTMENTS

Heapin' Mailbag/3 A sampling of the mail we got since last issue, including our first letter from a horny guy who somehow felt compelled to tell his about his muscular disease. Plus, an update on the world's biggest fire hazard. **Disc Dish/34** Our CD reviews section, with a whole new look. May the free music now come a-pourin' in. **Videos/40** Nearly 80 old and new tapes for you to waste valuable chunks of your life viewing. Reviews by Rod Lott, with Louis Fowler. **Hong Kong Express/60** And when you're done watching the Pamela Lee sexcapade, Ryun Patterson has a few recommendations for the Asian film lover in you.

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HITCHBITS

20 Horrific Tuneless Ain't Worth Squat Mega Smash Hits of the Nineties/8 Tired of Matchbox 20 yet? Just wait 'til K-Tel starts using it in ad. By Steve Hunt. **HITCH Condensed Books/9** Reading crap so you don't have to. **Tom Neesnan's Belated Movie Reviews/9** *Desperately Seeking Susan*? Better late than never. By Tom Neesnan. **Six Degrees of Brad Pitt's Bare Ass/9** Makin' bacon with the pockmarked heartthrob's heinie. **The Robert Goulet Death Watch/9** Closer ... closer ... **Remembering Vicki!/10** A fond look back at Ms. Lawrence's late, not-so-great talk show. By Rod Lott. **Rockwood/10** The plagued-by-technical-difficulties comic strip that was supposed to be in the last issue. By Brian Lundmark. **"What Time's the Game Start?"/11** It's fun to pick on beer-swilling jocks. By Steve Hunt. **"Dear Mr. Clipson:"/11** Our resident consumer watchdog and his poison pen return. By Bob Clipson. **Got Flubber?/12** Disney ensures against low public awareness of blockbuster via cheesy promo items. By Rod Lott. **Hair Prix/12** Ken's still winning ... as if. **Bowelwatch/13** Thirty days of baby poo, meticulously tracked and graphed for your reading pleasure. By Rod Lott. **The No Doubt-o-Meter/13** May it explode. **Soaps in Review/13** In case you have a life and missed them. By Ryun Patterson. **HITCH's Celebrity Ski-Off '98/14** Our meanest board game yet. By Rod Lott. **HITCH Vox Populi/15** Your useless feedback on useless questions.

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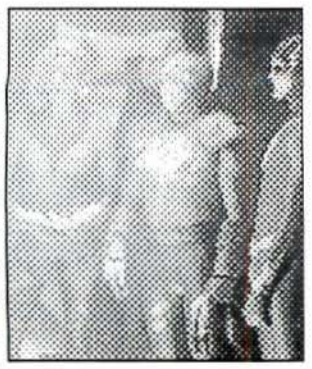

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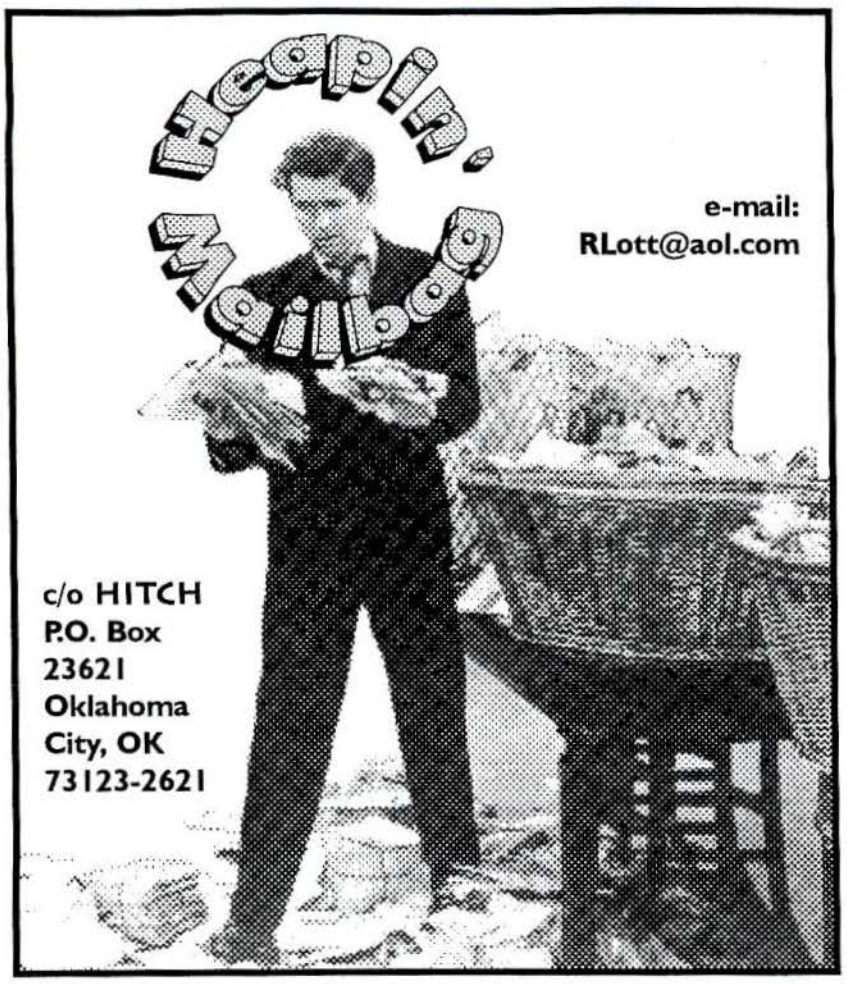


Letters of the Month

Hello,

My name is Wim. I come from the Netherlands. I am 26 years old and I have muscular disease. For some years now I am obcesed (*sic*) about sex. My favorite erotic movie star is Shannon Whirry. She is a very sensual woman and I get very exited (*sic*) when I look at here (*sic*). Last Saturday I saw one of the erotic thrillers, who she is acting in (*sic*). It's called *Mirror Images II* and I like the erotic scenes. Also it's a very exiting (*sic*) movie.

Hopefully I can see more erotic thrillers with Shannon Whirry in future. I have a lot of fantasies with Shannon and me.

Wim Huysen
schenk@ptfe12.hro.nl

Rod,

Why in the hell is Ryun wearing *Mexican* headgear in an *Asian*-themed column ("Ryun Patterson's Hong Kong Express," **HITCH** 16)?

Les Pennick
Wichita, KS

Ryun responds: "Actually, sombreros are a popular form of headgear throughout Asia. They were originally brought to Hong Kong by the great explorer Herve Villachaize (the other one)."

Rod,

Thanks for **HITCH** 15. I enjoyed it a bunch. More than enough, in fact, to enclose $20 for a six-issue subscription beginning with **HITCH** 16.

One question: How and why does sound magically make **HITCH** funnier? Reading the mag silently to myself, as any sane person would do, was amusing enough to: a) induce the occasional mild smile, and b) make me re-read selected portions *out loud* to my wife and kid during one never-to-be-forgotten dinner. Hell, it bordered on disgusting. Said wife and kid, armed with the knowledge that I was neither drunk nor stoned, were suitably befuddled by my gales of tear-gushing, food-spluttering laughter, gales which very nearly thwarted the reviews of *We're Going to the Farm*; *Day of the Warrior*; *It's Potty Time*; *The Crush*; *Milk Cow, Eat Cheese*; *Mary-Kate and Ashley's Hawaiian Beach Party*; *Alyas Batman en Robin*; and *King Kong Lives*.

Now it's true that I have been down on the farm and even went potty (in an outhouse) while I was there, that I do write *Batman* for DC Comics, and that I once wrote *four* separate screenplays for the same idiotic Dino DeLaurentiis movie (don't ask, but it was *Red Sonja* – and no, you will never *ever* find my name in the credits, as if you or anyone else would ever look. And to date, I've yet to find the 90-odd minutes required to actually view the "finished" movie, but I damned well *make* the time to read a **HITCH** review of it), but nothing can explain the sheer, unbridled hilarity conferred by sonic vibration to these movie reviews. Hell, I don't even *know* Andy Sidaris or Mary-Kate and Ashley. Or at least I don't think I do.

In any case, I suggest the swift addition of a masthead slogan something along the lines of: "The Magazine So Funny It Must Be Read Aloud, Although You Won't Believe It Until You *Do* Read It Aloud."

P.S.: Thanks for ruining Voight's wink, you bastard!

Doug Moench
Ottsville, PA

Not only does Doug write Batman, *which makes him cool in my book alone, but is the author of the fabulous* The Big Book of the Unexplained *and the even more fabulous* The Big Book of Conspiracies, *both available from DC's Paradox Press line.*

Rod:

Hoping this is the main proprietor of **HITCH** Magazine. I happen to be in a rock group named "Hitch," and it is my everlasting fear that the name has already been used somewhere before (I had never heard of your mag before naming the band). So, this e-mail is to say I checked out your magazine and I really really appreciate your sense of humor and hope you will use it to not sue me for being in Hitch. It'd be like scouring a dry well, anyway, I swear. If you're ever in town, look us up. We'll hang.

'Til then, keep up the good work. The Crispin Glover thing ("Up Close and Scary with Crispin Glover," **HITCH** 7) ruled.

D.W. Bodine
San Francisco, CA

Sue? Nonsense. Keep on rockin'! And may we hear one of your "rock group's" fine compositions in a Taco Bueno spot soon?

Yes, He's Only Bill

Dear Rod,

I, too, have come face-to-face with the Bookman. He's a transvestite, if you didn't know. He came to our garage sale and bought my wife's underwear.

Name Withheld
Oklahoma City, OK

Dear Rowdy Roddy Piper,

I am a huge fan of yours. Can you team up with Don "The Dragon" Wil— oops, wrong Rod.

Dear Rod,

Loved **HITCH** 15. Just thinking about it makes me feel kind of warm and tingly. I love it when my favorite magazine takes me to such wondrous places as Lamaze class ("Labor O' Love"). Ohhh...does the excitement ever stop at the **HITCH** office?

Now this may be a bit late, but any news on Bill the Bookman is good news. I stopped in, posing as a college student in order to pass his are-you-21 quiz. Upon stepping on a layer of a brown goo-like substance, I asked him if he bought videos and he said, "Yeah, especially if they're man-on-man or woman-on-dog." He also pointed out to me that he is a transvestite; sure enough, he had on a dress that looked like Dorothy's from *The Wizard of Oz*. Looking around, I noticed many porcelain fig-

THAT'S POP

For starters, welcome to our inaugural "Subliminal Message Issue." And what, pray tell, does that mean? It's a fun little trick we picked up in high school, this subliminal thing. Now, almost a decade later, thanks to the technological wonder that is Adobe Photoshop, it's a helluva lot easier to pull off.

Uh-huh, yes, but what does it mean? It means that at any moment – perhaps even now – your unconscious mind is being stimulated to act out in a most irrational manner. Maybe to fire us off a check for $20 for a subscription. Maybe to buy some back issues, *even ones you may already own.* Maybe to send us cold, hard cash for no reason at all. Face it: *You are under our control.*

Contrary to popular belief, **HITCH** has never before participated in this experiment. It is new territory for this magazine. Perhaps that's *Ladies' Home Journal* or some other printed tool of Satan you have us confused with that is apt to perform such cerebral twists on a monthly basis. They'd have you believe that baking Toll House cookies somehow affects the entire world, or that Crutchfield dress patterns are It.

Kathie Lee Gifford? Thanks to subliminal stimulation, she stands today as a household name. (Actually, there's nothing subliminal about it; they've been quite open about it.) But we're not to about to inflict similar evils. Dirty words embedded into photographs? Sales ploys hidden within text that fail to be noticed by the eye? Yes, that's us and what we aim to achieve with our subliminal games. But show you childhood photos of the First Lady or give you recipes of snack treats for your dog? We won't stand for it.

You may have noticed – and this, we swear, is not subliminal – that this **HITCH** looks a bit different from all the rest. Allow us to settle your minds: Yes, it's on purpose.

Oh, sure, we've longed subscribed to the aged philosophies of the "if it ain't broke" variety, but – much like

ures covered in a chocolate-like substance. Putting two and two together, I decided to leave, but not before I bumped into a man carrying a stack of videos, one of which was called *The Rod Squad: A Double Team on Cream.*

Louis Fowler
Oklahoma City, OK

Rod,

The "What Is This Dog Thinking?" cover (**HITCH** 13) has been garnering tons of response around here. The last **HITCH** I have is the Heston issue (**HITCH** 4); you've grown a lot since then. I liked (big shock!) the vid reviews the best. Where the hell do you find time to review them all?

Every Halloween, KTLA from L.A. used to screen *Mad Monster Party*. It's a hoot. The piece on the bookstore with books piled everywhere was genius. We had a small quake (4.0) here about 10 years ago and some book nut was crushed to death by his book collection. Whatta way to go.

John Chilson
San Diego, CA

For an update on Bill and his house of doom, turn to page 7.

The Trouble with Dick

Rawd–

To begin with: found your dickaphobia article good ("Ya Down Wit' OCD?," **HITCH** 16), but a bit flawed. You are placing far too much faith in the (im)possibility that the burrito in your hands is free of dick upon receiving it. Where I live, all the public restrooms in food places have, affixed to their mirrors, "handy" notices reminding workers that washing their hands is, in short, a good thing to do which also "prevents the spread of disease" (of dick?).

Naturally, Rod, these signs also place credulous trust in the (im)possibility that workers would both *read* them and *care* about their message. I do not ascribe to the belief that folks are inherently "good," but I don't believe they are inherently "bad" either (and there I throw out the concept of original sin); the only thing I can see that humans are born with is a natural leaning toward laziness. In short, *mi amigo*, you are placing an onus upon the shoulders of the burrito assembler of taking the *effort* to wash his hands prior to handling the "food" you then put into your body. Sure, okay, *your* hands may be sanitized, but I doubt that a Taco Bell employee who earns minimum wage and wears a self-effacing nametag would bother to remove himself from the downward entropic drift of laziness to make your snack dick-free.

Now, *why did you have faith in seeing a good U2 gig in the first place?* I suppose this would be more directly addressed to Mr. Davis, but as the two of you went about this misadventure in a joint fashion ("To POP Go the Weasels"), I direct my constructive criticisms toward that wretched duality-of-gripe hereafter known as Lottadavis.

To moan about Mr. Hewson (aka "Bono," aka "Mephisto," aka "Lamé Man," aka "Look at Me," aka "When Do I Get Canonized?") "selling out" is, I'd say, a bit overdue. The sellout had arrived before that self-indulgent big-screen venture rattled into town, had arrived before the four-note megahit "With or Without You" was made, had arrived with that wave of sellouts (REMike comes to mind). The Red Rocks gig (*Under a Blood Red Sky*) was the watershed; the rest was descent. To lament a sellout long after such poignancy as *"She's alright / She's alright / She's al-right"* has been uttered is – how to say – slow to the punch? Tell me it doesn't *really* take such an in-your-face blatancy as a gigantic Styrofoam martini olive stageprop to let truth be known. In five years, you'll probably be moaning that Alanis has done gone and sold out, too.

E. Marvin Mervin
Salem, OR

No, we've always hated Alanis.

Rod,

Thanks to your "Ya Down Wit' OCD?" article, I can now no longer use the restroom next to my office at work without wondering if I'm touching phallus. Damn you.

I do have to add, however, that I think a blow dryer would be safer than paper towels. Yes, someone did scratch the message to read "PUSH BUTT," but that was probably done at the factory (ever notice how they're all scratched the same?). The only people who touch it on a regular basis are the people who have already washed their hands. Thus, I think it would be far less contaminated than the most gruesome "clump of foreskin." Ick. I have to wash my hands now just from typing that.

Brian Lundmark
Norman, OK

Dear Rod @ **HITCH**,

Issue #16 is just great! I really enjoyed your piece on OCD, page 28. And the funny bit on Holly Day ("We Think That We Shall Never

See..."). I had to call Nick and read him the entire four-page spread over the telephone. Thanks!

Kez Panel
Moon, PA

All That T&A

Mr. Lott:

I read your review of *Day of the Warrior* online and I was wondering: Could you tell many minutes the film is? Lastly, since this seems to be an excellent film, could you tell me where I could get a copy?

Alex Bischoff
abischof@vt.edu

Oh, I don't know, say ... a video store? Such establishments having been providing access to films to dolts like you for nearly two decades now.

For a review of the Day of the Warrior *sequel,* Return to Savage Beach, *please turn to our "Videos" section. Those with muscular disease, please ask for assistance.*

The Usual

Rod:

Oh, man, *Video Nag* ("Videos," **HITCH** 16). Whatta dead-on review. I think she was lip-synching during part of it. You gotta give the filmmakers credit. Their stated goal is to piss you off. When I consider than I spent 20 clams on it, I get really pissed off!

Thanks for the scoop on the *Product Music* CD ("Disc Dish," **HITCH** 15). I snapped one up.

John Stubblefield
South Bend, IN

Rod,

Darn you and your funny magazine! I was all set to go to bed before midnight, but decided I'd give **HITCH** a read first. Then, before I know it, it's 1 a.m. and I'm still reading! So if my work the next day was sub-par, the blame rests on your head! That's some very funny material. You've got a nice magazine to be proud of. I guess I'm going to have to get a subscription now.

Jason Brown
Oklahoma City, OK

Rod:

I just wanted to say that I really like your zine. It's hilarious!!!!!

Shelly McAndrew
Bethlehem, PA

Dear Rod,

I saw your zine, **HITCH**, in *Factsheet 5*. Issue 12 looked really good, with the Chuck E. Cheese ("UpChuck E. Cheese") and "The Eagles Must Die!" articles. The coincidence about their hits and major global tragedies sounds cool, and it doesn't surprised me a bit. I've enclosed $4 for a sample issue. .

Adam Balivet
Danville, VT

Rod–

Thanks for the last issue. As usual, a real hoot. As I said before, your rag is one of the few I can actually read cover to cover.

Mike Accomando
Fairview, NJ

Hey Rod,

I got your great zine last week and really enjoyed it – another great issue. I appreciate your off-the-wall subjects and irreverent art and lampoons. I found myself laughing out loud at your "Placenta and Waffles" story! You've got a great knack for capturing all the goofy stuff in life that others never notice. A glossy cover – wow! Looks great.

Dana Countryman
Everett, WA

Unholiest Father,

HITCH 16: It's about time. I was starting to think that woman and that pig brat of yours had overtaken your little publishing empire or turned your jockeys inside out and hung you from the ceiling.

But enough of my harsh rhetoric. Indeed, the practical joke on the Gopher poet ("We Think That We Shall Never See...") was ill-matic. Straight-up cruelty. "Of Placenta and Waffles" sent me to tears, "SAID" always kills me, sad to see "Beetle Bailey" go the way of *Knight Rider*, and holy wow, how many videos can one man watch while staying up all night with a brand-new baby? A "Lott," I guess.

Taylor Holland
Austin, TX

Oh, I get it: Lott = lot. A pun! That's *new.*

Hey Rod,

I hate reading **HITCH** because I always want to see about 10 of the videos and don't have time.

Chip Rowe
Chicago, IL

Hello!

I recently picked up a copy of your fanzine while at a friend's house. I enjoyed reading all of your articles ... really dug it. Are you still printing issues? This letter is the only way I can verify your existence. If you are still running your fanzine, let me know. I look forward to reading more of your stuff.

J.D.
New York City, NY

Rod,

I picked up a tattered, half-price copy of *The Book of Zines* today and was happy to see your

the requisite homely fat girl on daytime talk shows – it was high time for a makeover. The section upfront of fractional stories and assorted pieces is now an honest-to-God section – named, appropriately, "**HITCH** Bits." We're cramming as many sidebars as we can into the lengthy stories, so as to aid those who prefer to use **HITCH** as toilet reading. You'll be seeing more pics, more graphics and more design flourishes we can get away with on our limited skills and technological resources. Regardless of how well *you* take a shine to it, *we* like it, and think we'll keep it.

Until, of course, we get sick of how this "new look" looks.

And if we're going to call ourselves "The Journal of Pop Culture Absurdity," then it's about time we started acting like a journal! Yep, beginning with this very ish, copious footnotes can be found among the main stories. Just don't expect them all to be serious.

So it's only fitting with this change that we announce a staff shake-up. We have the first **HITCH** marriage on record, as longtime contributors Joe Rogers and Jamie Munn were married in a small (read: no one was invited) ceremony in November. Thus, from here on out, Jamie will be known as "Jamie Rogers." This means nothing to anyone except Ryun Patterson, who is excited to be moving up alphabetically to the top of the senior editors' list. Trust me, this is something he's been bitching about for at least the better part of a year, so this is a victory of sorts.

Subliminal or not, we hope you like the direction in which **HITCH** is headed. (My eighth-grade English teacher would be so proud of me for not ending that last sentence in a preposition.) If not, hey, we already got your money ... oh, and you'll be stimulated to think otherwise.

• • •

So enough of the preaching. It's time to get to reading this first step in **HITCH**'s "New World Order."

Set it on top of the throne next to the Toilet Duck and read. Enjoy. And then drop us a line and tell us what you think. Because, hey, we love you.

name all over it. The smile was quickly slapped off my face, however, when it occurred to me that it had been five months since I had seen a new **HITCH**. You've been pretty good about getting it out every two to three months, so I'm guessing I may have missed an issue? Or am I just getting myself worked up over nothing?

Paul Kazee
New York City, NY

What Freakin' Catalog?

Hi,

I have your mailing address. I'd like to request your catalog.

Steve Berger
Independence, KY

HITCH,

Please send me a copy of your catalog, along with any other info I may need. Please add my name to your mailing list.

John Joseph Kunco
Pittsburgh, PA

Dear **HITCH**,

I was wondering if I could receive your catalog or brochure to order some of your top-of-the-line products.

Herbert Harris
Inmate #173433
East Lake, MI

Dear **HITCH**,

Hi, I'm Christopher J. Sharron and really deaf. I would ask you which please you will send to me for your free catalog or I would pay a your catalog (*sic*)? Thank you.

Christopher J. Sharron
Address Unknown

Fungus Mail

Dear Rod Lot:

Not too long ago, we sent you a video and kit with the inside story on nail fungus and how Lamisil® tablets can successfully treat it. If you've already seen a doctor, you're probably taking Lamisil tablets and are well on your way to having healthier, more beautiful nails.

But if you haven't seen your doctor, we hope you'll be planning a visit very soon. Lamisil tablets may have some side effects for some people. In clinical studies, the most commonly reported were headache and gastrointestinal upset. In rare instances, adverse effects on the liver and serious skin reactions were reported. However, Lamisil is well tolerated by most people.

Remember, you deserve healthy, good-looking nails, and they are possible for many people. As you now know, nail fungus rarely goes away by itself and can even be unhealthy. If it's not treated, nail fungus can eventually deform your nails. So, see your doctor and ask about Lamisil tablets. The sooner you do, the sooner you may enjoy healthier, more beautiful nails.

Stephan A. Billstein, MD
Medical Director
Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp.
East Hanover, NJ

Stephan: You silly bastard. We only requested the video so we could make fun of it ... and did! Cool people like me already have beautiful, healthy nails, and don't have to kill our liver for it.

www.suckup.com

Hi Rod,

How can I subscribe to your magazine? Very funny web page!

Steve Junot
dirtysteve@rocketmail.com

RLott:

When the hell are you guys gonna update? Tell that no-good loser Wilken to get on the stick!

Tony Shanks
Norman, OK

Subs & Whatnot

Rod,

I got a sample copy of **HITCH** a few months ago, and I laughed myself silly. Now I'd like to know if you have subscriptions.

Andrea Gibson
gibson@frognet.net

Hi,

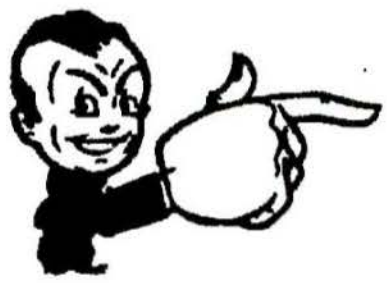
I found a sample from your zine in a book here in Canada. Intrigued, I rushed out and bought some American $$. Can you send me a copy of **HITCH**?

Cindy Deachman
Ottowa, Ontario
Canada

Remember, send all kind words and acrimonious missives to our address on pg. 3.

HITCH Online

http://www.ionet.net/~twilken/HITCH



Mr. Big Hand

The Book of Zines

featuring Hitch

at bookstores, or
phone (800) 288-2131

http://www.zinebook.com

fixin's

In our rush to get the last issue out, a few minor, insignificant errors sneaked in. It's highly likely none of you noticed. But Mom and Dad honesty is the best policy, so among them:

was	shoulda been
they'll	*they're*
Ventures	*Venture's*
naval	*navel*
Living	*Livin'*
Jungle Boogie	*Jungle Fever*
even	*ever*
become	*became*
a	*the*
them	*their*
fattempt	*attempt*
wouldn't	*would*

HITCH *Proven Omniscient as Bill's Yesterday Books Goes Up in Flames!*

Heapin' Mailbag UP DATE

photos by Sarah Woolwine

It's not often that we get to update you on previous articles that have appeared in **HITCH** – okay, let's be honest: we never do – so this is a real treat (albeit a tragic treat) for us.

If you'll recall the long-winded-titled story "I'm Just Bill, Yes, I'm Only Bill, and I Stack Books Up as High as a Hill" from **HITCH** 14, co-authors Rod Lott and Joe Rogers made note that one Bill's Yesterday Books establishment was a not-so-towering inferno waiting to happen.

In November of 1997, it did.

Initial reports from cub reporter Louis Fowler had Bill pegged as a fat corpse when his industrial coffee machine sparked a'fire during the night and Bill, in a mad rush to escape, was penned to his doom underneath a fallen stack of hardbacks and spank mags.

As it turns out, however, Fowler has corrected himself, and reports that Bill remains alive, although he apparently was trapped for some time under a sea of weighty tomes. And the source of the fire – which sent his "bookstore" crumbling to the ground – was not a vengeful Mr. Coffee, but an exploding Magnavox television set.

We at **HITCH** pat ourselves on the back for calling it as we saw it. Namely, for teasing the story with the cover bug "World's Biggest Fire Hazard."

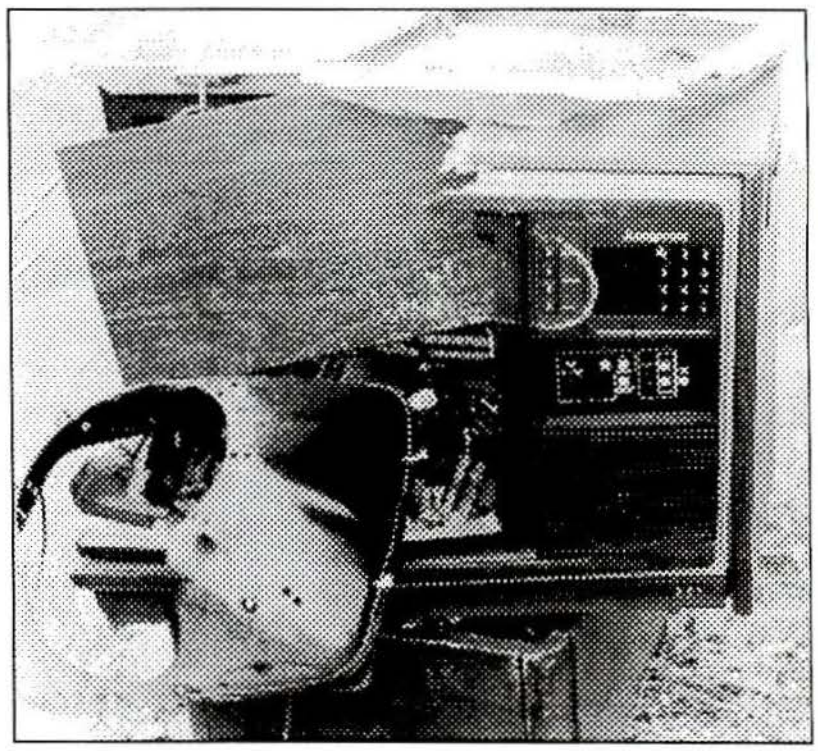
Let's face it: We're smart.

And also kind.

To help Bill out in these trying times, we've set up a recovery fund of sorts for him. Please send all monetary donations to: Helpin' Bail Out Bill, c/o **HITCH**, P.O. Box 23621, Oklahoma City, OK, 73123-2621 ... oh, who are we kidding? He'd just spend it on *Ouis* and portable buildings.

(at right)
Bill's toy robot Toby (he can talk!) surveys the damage.

(below)
The oh-so-feisty Magnavox that brought Bill's dream of being the pervert's Barnes & Noble to a fiery end.



SUBSCRIBE!

Mail-order subscriptions to **HITCH**: *The Journal of Pop Culture Absurdity* are still just $20 (payable to Rod M. Lott) for six (fairly quarterly) issues. That kind of money can't buy you a hooker nowadays, so you might as well send it our way.

HITCH
Box 23621
Oklahoma City, OK • 73123-2621

HITCHBITS

with gravy!

20 Horrific Tuneless Ain't-Worth-Squat Mega Smash Hits of the Nineties!

The prevailing theory that trends and fads run in about a 15- to 20-year cycle is one that pertains greatly to the area of music, especially at this point and time. Fifteen to 20 years ago, dopey hair bands such as Survivor, Foreigner, Loverboy, .38 Special, Asia and several others dominated the charts with howling, methodical tunes that projected feelings of tremendous hopelessness, despair and bad outfits.

Now, some two decades after we endured the likes of "Sister Christian," "Eye of the Tiger," "Lovin' Every Minute of It" and "Feels Like the First Time," the aforementioned bands – and the aura they emitted – have been seemingly transmogrified into a new breed of methodical melody fodder: witness The Wallflowers, Third Eye Blind, Bush (Gavin, yeah!), The Verve Pipe and Matchbox Whatever, with such jolly tunes as "Push" (*"I wanna push you around / Yeah I will, yeah I will"* – brilliant!), "The Difference," "Little Things,"[1] "The Freshmen," and so on, and so on, and so on.

I imagine sometime earlier this week, there was a dopey guy watching *Ricki Lake* or whatever, and there came a commercial break. Following the advertisements for products that cater to the instant-gratification set, on comes one of those K-Tel Records spots.

"K-Tel presents *The Rockin' Late '70s!* Do you remember those great bands such as Asia, Loverboy..." and then, a list of the songs on the album scroll while a medley of those scrolling tunes is played, one blending into the other, to the point where they sound like one song. As this ad continues, the dopey guy recalls old times, and says to his pal or self, "Gosh, do you remember that summer when we sat around, wore funny pants and listened to Loverboy, Foreigner, Survivor and .38 Special? Those were fine times, weren't they!"

His pal agrees, and asks if it's okay when Ricki ends, if they can watch *Dorf on Golf.*

Fast-forward 20 years into the future: Some zany chick, while once again regretting her multiple piercings, is watching a similar talk show. A commercial break comes, including an ad for pies and the Elton John *Princess Di Memorial CD: Volume 23*. Then follows a vaguely K-Telesque commercial, where The Wallflowers, Third Eye Blind and all those others are featured on *The Rockin' '90s* album, only these guys' tunes blend together even better for this ad's medley; in fact, she wonders why they just play one song.

"Wow!" she says to her friend, Nate. "Nate, d'ya remember the summer when we sat around, wore funny pants and listened to The Verve Pipe, Matchbox 6000 and Bush? Weren't those keen times?"

Nate grunts, and reminds her that carpenters are coming later that day to lower the floors, as his knuckles have been scraping on them.

Notice the similarities, kids? They sure are stunning: Popular music today is krrrrrrap, as it was years ago. Sure, occasionally I think perhaps that I am a bit too harsh, critical and that possibly while I was couple- skating to the slow tunes of Foreigner and Air Supply, or jamming to "Eye of The Tiger" while watching *Rocky III*, some disgruntled music fan was thinking to himself "Confound these bands! Why, these folks are equally disturbing as were The Kingsmen, Buddy Holly, Herb Alpert and all those other dorks!" while I aloofly enjoyed them so.

But when I think these thoughts, it always takes just a few seconds and I get my mind back, realize that today's popular music does indeed suck and continue to refuse compromising my musical standards. Instead, I use my time to enjoy Radiohead, Bjork, Portishead, Scenic and others that actually do exist, contrary to "popular" belief. And why wait on K-Tel? See the mix tape insert on pg. 15! *—Steve Hunt*

[1]This is the worst song *ever*.

FUN FACTS

Aside from tree-smackin' shenanigans, Michael Kennedy and Sonny Bono have something else in common: shagging women sane men wouldn't dare touch. In Mikey's case, an underage babysitter; in Sonny's case, Cher.

Nothing but the Good Parts

HITCH Condensed Books

This Month: *Killer Instinct: How Two Young Producers Took on Hollywood and Made the Most Controversial Film of the Decade*, by *Natural Born Killers* producer Jane Hamsher

"I'm sorry I couldn't see you yesterday when you came by, but I'd taken some 'smart drugs,' and I passed out," [Oliver Stone] said. "They had to call the paramedics. I didn't remember anything until I woke up in the hospital this morning and this nurse had her hand on my cock." ... When we got back into the van, Oliver whipped out a joint. ... But by the time the Navajo police had been tailing us for about five miles, Oliver's paranoia took over, and he flipped out. "You're going too slow!" he screamed. "He knows we've got drugs in the van." ... Suddenly up ahead we saw a police roadblock. "It's for us!" he screamed. The only available was the parking lot of a Kentucky Fried Chicken to the right. Oliver (dragged) me out of the van and into the KFC. "Order me something so they won't be suspicious while I take a leak." ... Oliver had almost no idea who Peter Gabriel was; he demonstrated his knowledge of rock music to Mr. Gabriel and his teenage daughter by explaining to them that what he's always *really* wanted to do was fuck Grace Slick."

Tom Neesnan's *Belated Movie Reviews*

JFK
(1991)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

This film, which chronicles trials and tribulations using multiple film stocks and camera angles, suited my fancy for films about presidents! The funny man from *Bob Durham* stars as a man who tries hard to find out who it was that shot at John Kennedy. Through the course of the film, we meet many interesting individuals – one that has funny hair and talks in puzzles, whom you and your friends will enjoy! But here is a warning: *JFK* does not stand for "just for kids," as some of the words in the film are adult in nature!

Desperately Seeking Susan
(1984)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

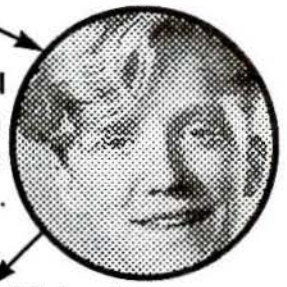
I usually try to avoid films that star people who are rock and roll performers, as I am not a big fan of that particular style of music, but when I heard this particular film had the girl from *The Aviator* in it, I said to myself, "Tom, let's just forget about our feelings towards rock and roll stars. Go see this film!" My oh my, was I glad I did, because this was a film like no other! This film is about a girl that wants to be cool like a girl named Susan, and along the way to becoming as cool, many funny things happen. Ha! I just recalled one! This film features the hit song "Get Up Into the Groove" by the rock star, and I must admit, it got me grooving in my movie chair! See this film soon! It is very good!

Boyz N the Hood
(1991)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

Although I do not condone the antics of youth who break, swipe and hoot 'n' holler, I certainly am a proponent of films that are good in content! This motion picture chronicles the story of some gang members who act badly so that they can gain the acceptance of other bad youth, which reminded me greatly of a group of bullies at Compton Elementary (the school I attended as a young boy) called "the Tuffies," who would require its potential members to hit the instructor of Billy Goodman's (he led the Tuffies) choice on the head with an apple and then run away. Yipes! See this film very soon, but if someone asks you to join a gang, tell them, "No, thank you; that is not for me!"

Six Degrees of Brad Pitt's Bare Ass

Michael Pare' was in *Into the Sun* with...

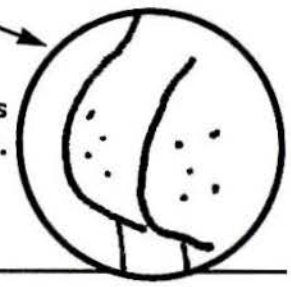


Anthony Michael Hall, who was in *Sixteen Candles* with...

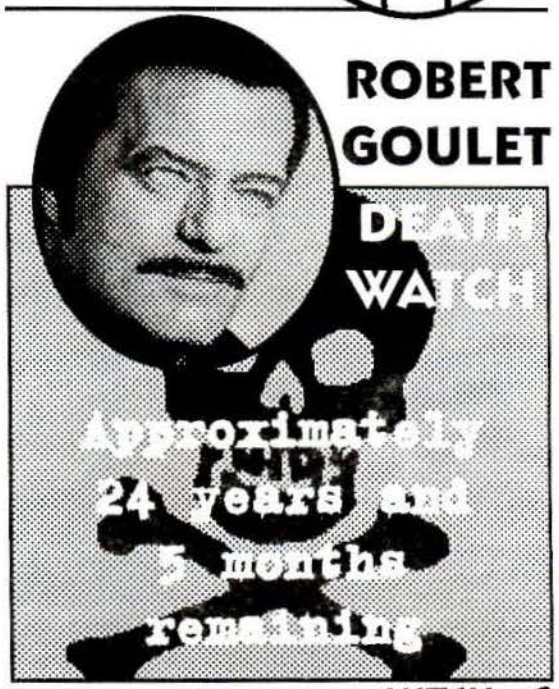
Michael Schoeffling, who was in *Let's Get Harry* with...

Mark Harmon, who was in *Worth Winning* with...

Madeline Stowe, who was in *12 Monkeys* with...



Brad Pitt's bare ass.



Remembering Vicki!

1

2

3

5

4

6

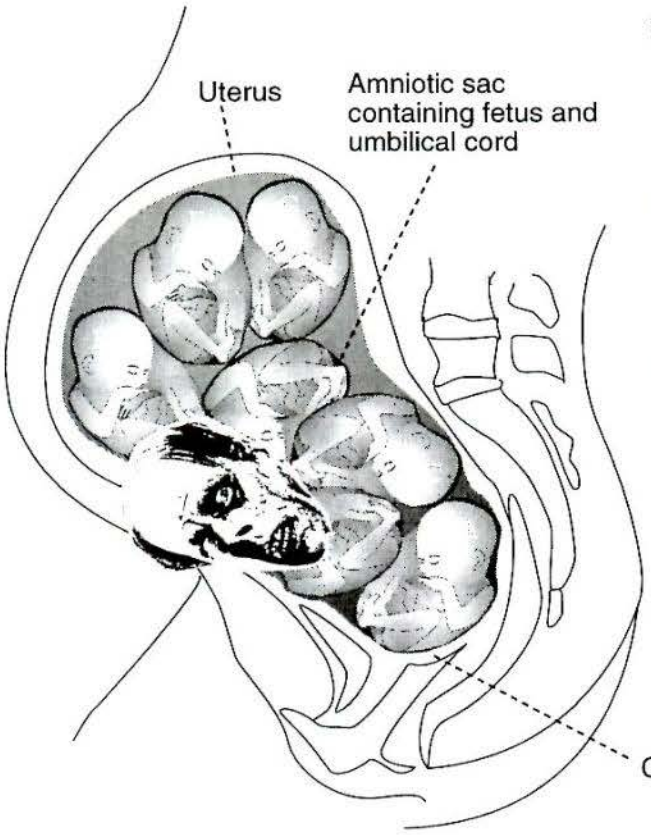
1. Ever the groundbreaker, Vicki was the first to perform fellatio on network television.
2. Vicki surprised Jay Leno with his look-alike. Also just like Jay, he isn't funny.
3. Hugh Hefner gave Vicki a *Playboy* featuring her *Mama's Family* character. The audience lie in a pool of sick.
4. Vicki vists on location with Chuckles the Enormous-Breasted Clown.
5. Stagehands gave Mary Lou Retton $20 to break Vicki's neck, but she chickened out, thus extending the show's run.
6. One show tackled the burning question, "Is Bob Alive?" but offered no concrete answers.

ROCKWOOD
by BRIAN LUNDMARK
WE'RE GONNA BE LATE!
THERE AREN'T ANY PARKING SPACES!
WE'RE WASTING TIME. LOOK! THEY'VE GOT VALET PARKING! LET THEM FIND A SPACE!
VALET PARKING
I'M NOT PAYING SOMEONE TO PARK MY CAR.
RELAX, OH TIGHTWADDED ONE. IT'S ON ME.
HOKEY SMOKES! LOOK WHO'S PARKING CARS!
WORD TO YOUR MOTHER!
MAYBE HE WAS "UNDER PRESSURE!"
HI! COULD YOU PARK THIS FIVE-POINT-OH?
IF THERE'S A PARKING SPACE, YO! I'LL FIND IT!
HERE'S YOUR TIP, TIP, BABY!

Visit Virtual Rockwood at http://www.rockwood.boffomac.com

Septuplets

Fertility medicine has permitted pregnancy in thousands of women who otherwise could not concieve. Yet, the tools are rather crude, and doctors cannot precisely control how many fetuses will take root in the womb. A look at the fetal positions of the septuplets born Wednesday:



Names in order of birth

Kenneth Robert
3 pounds, 4 ounces

Alexis May
2 pounds, 11 ounces

Natalie Sue
2 pounds, 10 ounces

Kelsey Ann
2 pounds, 5 ounces

Brandon James
3 pounds, 3 ounces

Nathanial Roy
2 pounds, 14 ounces

Joel Steven
2 pounds, 15 ounces

A HITCH Sociology Experiment

"What Time's the Game Start?"

Sheet-metal-worker types love football!

One particular Monday not long ago, a friend and I were asked to crash this one girl's date with a guy who she felt had certain goob potential; thus, she wanted us to "just happen" to come into The Royal Orleans, spot her and invite her somewhere, should the aforementioned lad's goob potential reach its potential.

When we arrived, a fetching Royal Orleans hostess informed us that they had closed down early, and that no one had been seated within the past two hours. Being the fine boys that we are, we decided to check all the establishments on Dallas' McKinney Avenue. And here is what we boys did to have fun while looking for her: Upon entering each of the following establishments, we hollered in a sheet-metal-workeresque fashion, "What time's the game start?"

Dopily as we asked, the following dopey answers were given:

☞ Hard Rock Cafe: "Compermisio?" –Hispanic busboy

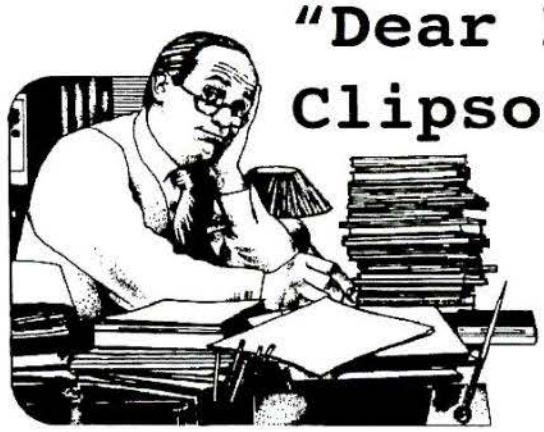
☞ Lulu's Bait Shack: "Started already! Third quarter, no TDs, dude! What a sorry game! We'll fix you somethin' good so you won't get too bored!" –Pony-tailed bartender

☞ Avanti's Piano Bar: "I dunno. Would you like to sit on the patio? It's a nice night." –Generic waitstaff guy

☞ Oyster Bar: "It started at 8! *Monday Night Football* is always at 8, silly!" –Gay man at the bar

—Steve Hunt

"Dear Mr. Clipson:"



For several issues now, readers have been inquiring as to the whereabouts of the MIA Mr. Clipson. Out of sheer laziness, he's been absent from his usual page.

As you can tell from the mention on this issue's cover, we fully expected him to return to these pages and make a glorious comeback in all of our hearts.

However, as we were sad to learn just before press time, Mr. Clipson's files have been misplaced.

In November of 1996, you see, the **HITCH** offices moved across town. To be honest, Mr. Clipson's files – containing each and every letter he had written and each and every response received – haven't been seen since. Not that we looked really, *really* hard for them, until now, and lo and behold, we can't find 'em!

We hope this setback is only temporary and not a permanent one. Though we've scoured the garage, we're confident Bob's letters will surface. Or not.

FUN FACTS

If buried in a coffin under six feet of earth, it takes an average of 10 to 12 years for an unembalmed human body to decompose to a skeleton ... even Chris Farley!

got flubber?

As if $10 million of TV advertising isn't enough, Disney bombards American movie critics with gifts a-plenty as reminders that *Flubber* is out ... and out for blood!

EXHIBIT A: Flubber pen
DESCRIPTION: This stylish stylus is black, replete with two glass bulbs, one of which is filled with green liquid (Flubber, perhaps?).
FLUBBERIFIC FACT: When the bulb containing the Flubber is pressed with fingers (or given a blast of hot breath), the Flubber oozes into the other bulb! This took us a week and a half to discover.
VERDICT: Ink is weak; writes for shit. Does nothing to pique interest in film.

EXHIBIT B: Flubber
DESCRIPTION: Purple glob of semi-solid substance. From Mattel (it's swell!).
FLUBBERIFIC FACT: This is as close to Flubber as one can get, my friend!
VERDICT: Smells like a hospital. Bounces like Dom DeLuise, but has nothing on the glory days of Slime. Desire to see film remains nonexistent.

EXHIBIT C: Dancing Flubber
DESCRIPTION: Mounted Flubber character that responds to sound.
FLUBBERIFIC FACT: Despite Disney pedigree, Flubber will dance to satanic death rock.
VERDICT: Even with fresh AAs, Flubber responds to every other utterance at best; motions resemble fits of epilepsy than actual dancing. Film unseen to this day; bounty placed on John Hughes' head.

—Rod Lott

It will surprise no one keeping up with the Hair Prix (newcomers, see **HITCH** 14) that Ken Davis has a commanding lead over Rod Lott. In fact, *all* votes garnered in the past six months have been in Ken's favor. You can still place your bet on who will lose their hair first at the official **HITCH** Hair Prix website, *www.frontiernet.net/~kend/bald.html*.

And now, some comments from those who already have cast their votes...

"I am a 30-year-old who also hates the fact of his hair departure. The last three years have been baseball cap city. I have adopted an attitude toward those who tease me: to attack his most obvious fault. For example: My wife's aunt comments on my growing face. I know she has dentures and, well, now so does everyone else that was present at that dinner. Just last week, we were invited to a couple's house, and the guy said I looked older than him because of my baldness. I said, "What's your trip, you short, stubby, pot-bellied twirp?" I told my wife it was best we leave, given as I am prone to violence and spend considerable time in the gym and playing pro-beach v-ball, I would squash this jerk. What do you think about my attitude? Am I too aggressive? Viva Bruce Willis! Viva Agassi!"

Jason Potts
74751.3242@compuserve.com

On top of ol' Ken

"Be brave and shave!!!"

Bryan Larsen
lilbear@concentric.net

"Speaking of Hair Clubs, a small group of men in Hong Kong are planning to start a club for bald men. I want to get in touch with bald men all over the world to see if they would like to join, and what would be the membership benefits they would expect."

Anonymous
counter@netvigator.com

"Has anyone considered assisting Mother Nature with a razor and some shaving cream? That could determine a winner in a hurry!"

Joe Cook
joecook@flash.net

"The coolest and best response for any young guy with thinning or receding hair is to pick up razor and smooth off that dome."

Mike
Address Unknown

"I recommend you do what I did when the hair started to go: Spend a couple of extra minutes every morning with the Schick and Edge. It's easier than fighting it!"

Mark
majmap@ionet.net

"God didn't make you that way. This is up to you to be that way. There are many ways to prevent hair loss. My friend was bald, too, but he had the desire to do something about it. His hair is almost back to normal. Like I said, it's up to you."

Cheryl Reynolds
ckrkptrk@bmmhnet.com

"At age 23, I was referred to as 'the older balding gentleman.' Just remember that your scalp is the solar panel for your sex machine and you'll do fine."

John Peterson
johnpete@olypen.com

"My advice, especially for Ken, is to beat nature to the punch and *shave your head*! The thought may sicken you at first, but after it's done, you will be *sooo* glad that you did it! It is so liberating, I can't even tell you! I'm 29 and have a full head of hair, but I shaved off my long hair in Sept. 1995, and I haven't let it go longer than a 1/2 inch since. I'm having my head shaved shiny bald again this weekend, and I can't wait! So, Ken: Shave your head, boy! You will *never* regret it!"

Daniel
glinda@qcc.org

"I am 21 years old. I have noticed my gradual hair loss since about 18, and I'm not going to hide it. In fact, I'm pretty anxious to be completely bald myself. It's definitely easier to take care of. As of now, my head is buzzed, and I love it. I can wake up and be gone in 20 minutes. I really admire you people who aren't ashamed of the way God has created you."

Matt Garrison
ggarris@acad.udallas.edu

FUN FACTS

In 1958, legendary rock singer Buddy Holly had a cosmetic makeover that included dental work to remove brown stains caused by the water in Lubbock, Texas; a bridge to replace the front teeth knocked out by Joe B. Mauldin in London; plastic surgery to remove acne scars; and a permanent wave. He still died soon anyway.

Bowelwatch

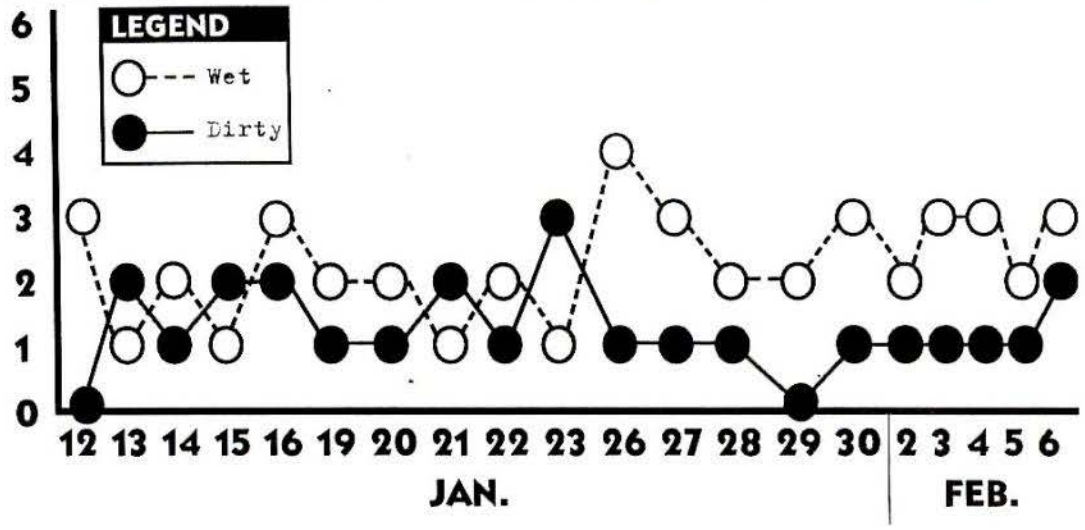
It is my duty, as a parent, to keep track of my infant son's doody.

I only want my child to be happy and healthy.

The culprit

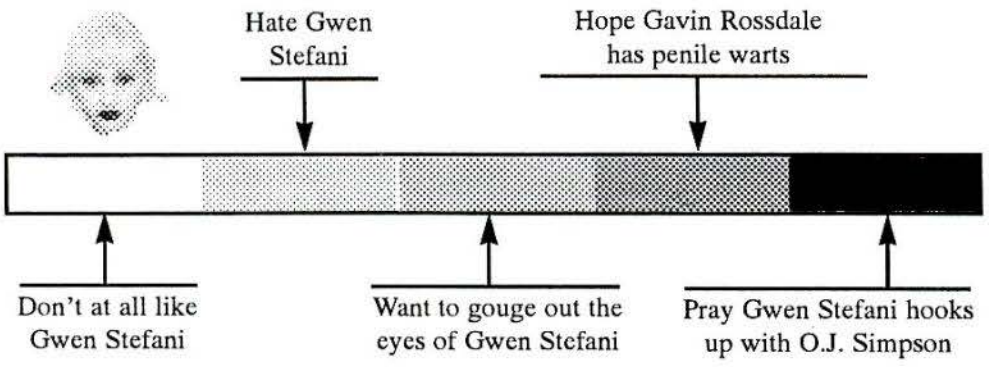
And if his plumbing is backed up, then I've failed to achieve those goals. Thus, I have resolved to make sure his kidneys and whatnot are in perfect working order. Luckily, the daycare babysitter tracks such diaper disasters. At right is a chart for the daily doings in a four-week timespan. Any irregularities will be duly noted and accounted for.

—Rod Lott



Where Might You Fall?

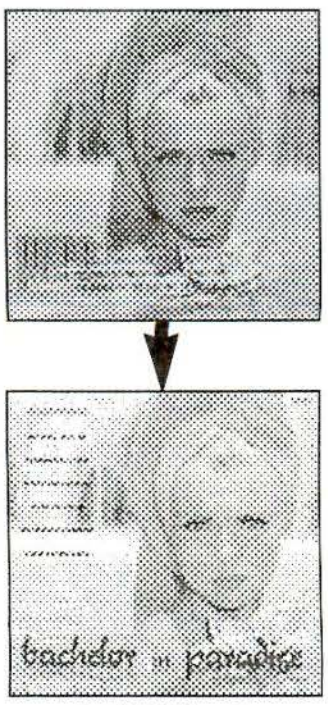
The No Doubt-o-meter


Hate Gwen Stefani
Hope Gavin Rossdale has penile warts
Don't at all like Gwen Stefani
Want to gouge out the eyes of Gwen Stefani
Pray Gwen Stefani hooks up with O.J. Simpson

Valid Proof That Poet Rod McKuen Lacks Originality

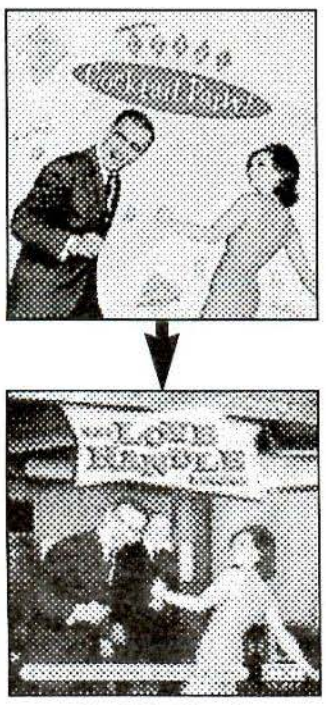
(And Owns the Same Stock Photo CDs as Everyone Else)

Exhibit A
Pure's *Generation Six-Pack*



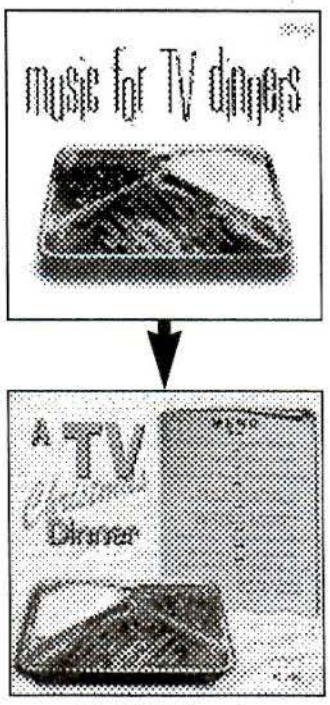
Rod McKuen's *Bachelor in Paradise*

Exhibit B
RCA Victor's *Another Crazy Cocktail Party*



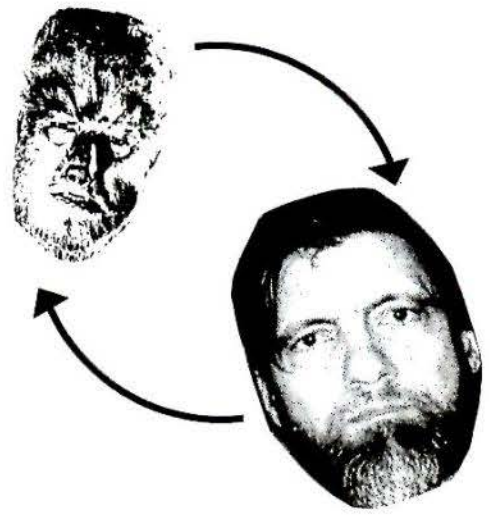
Rod McKuen's *The Love Handle Lounge*

Exhibit C
Scamp's *Music for TV Dinners*



Rod McKuen's *A Christmas TV Dinner*

FUN FACTS



Prior to his trial, alleged Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski shaved.

Soaps in Review

The Young and the Restless

While researching his family history, Domenick discovers that his fiancé Kara is really his daughter. Unbeknownst to him, however, the genealogical records were altered by his ex-wife Melanie in an attempt to drive him insane. Unbeknownst to Melanie, however, Dr. Rex Stoutman implanted her memories of being married to Domenick in an attempt to have a good chuckle. Jake and Kristie, John and Freida and BJ and The Bear all get drunk and sleep together. The Bear gets pregnant.

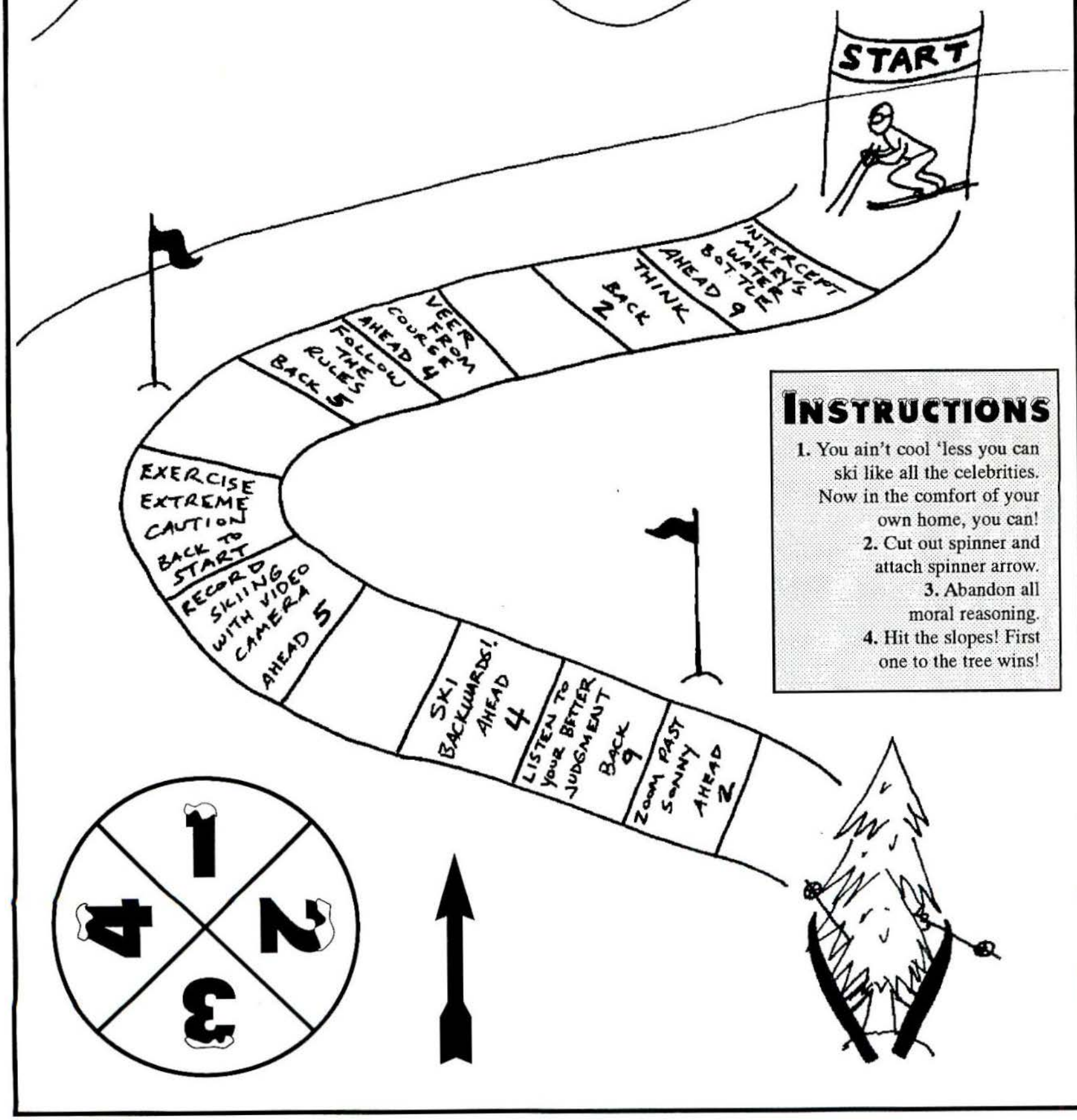
One Life to Live

After traveling to the mystic East in search of enlightenment and a mail-order bride, Jimmy realizes he is the reincarnated spirit of Kollie, The Hindu Goddess of Shaggy Dogs. Maggie meets a mysterious Frenchman named Claude who woos her with his devilish language and slick hair. Marie is imprisoned by Zelda in a crude attempt to win the love of her therapist, Dr. Mitch Stone, who happens to be smitten with Maggie's twin sister Olga. While Daffodil searches the country for her long-lost gynecologist, she is haunted by dreams of June Lockhart.

continued on pg. 15

PLAY HITCH'S

celebrity ski-off '98



INSTRUCTIONS

1. You ain't cool 'less you can ski like all the celebrities. Now in the comfort of your own home, you can!
2. Cut out spinner and attach spinner arrow.
3. Abandon all moral reasoning.
4. Hit the slopes! First one to the tree wins!

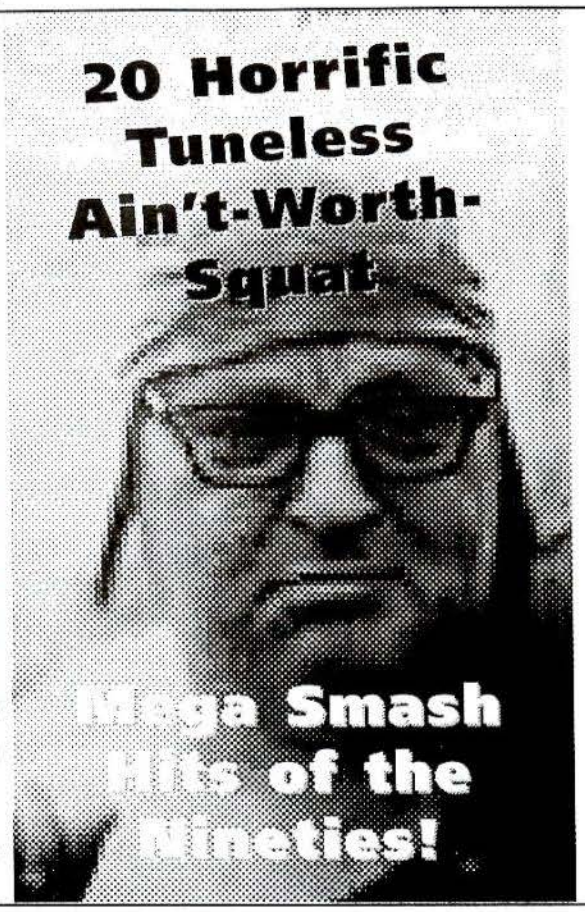
Make That Mix Tape!

Why wait two years for K-Tel to do it? Simply cut out this cassette insert, fold on the arrows, fill up a Maxell and get to jammin'!

FOLD FOLD FOLD

20 Horrific Tuneless Ain't-Worth-Squat
Mega Smash Hits of the Nineties!

© 1998, Your Own Damn Records, Made on Your Own Damn Time. **HITCH** assumes no responsibility for the songs within, and Lord knows we wouldn't want to.



TRACK LISTING

1. "The Difference" The Wallflowers
2. "Semi-Charmed Life" Third Eye Blind
3. "Little Things" Bush
4. "The Freshmen" The Verve Pipe
5. "Push" Matchbox 20
6. "Bitch" Meredith Brooks
7. "Foolish Games" Jewel
8. "Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?" Paula Cole
9. "1979" Smashing Pumpkins
10. "Tubthumping" Chumbawamba
11. "Two Become One" Spice Girls
12. "Barbie Girl" Aqua
13. "My Heart Will Go On" Celine Dion
14. "What I Got" Sublime
15. "Fly" Sugar Ray
16. "Mmmbop" Hanson
17. "Don't Speak" No Doubt
18. "Counting Blue Cars" Dishwalla
19. "I'll Be Missing You" Puff Daddy
20. "The Green Day Megamix"

Vol. 2 Coming Very Soon!

Soaps in Review

continued from pg. 13

Santa Barbara

Nastassia is drugged by Joyce in an attempt to win her back from Jules, who finds lost treasure while deep-sea fishing. Camille escapes from the hospital after her attempted suicide, but is apprehended once more just as she tries to lick her hands after handling raw chicken. Buffy tries to seduce Mr. French, and Jody hits the pipe again.

Days of Our Lives

Thad goes to the fish market in search for a suitable halibut for his romantic interlude with Kassie, but realizes the ideal halibut is actually his half-brother, Arthur. Kassie shares with Stephanie her misgivings about her relationship with Thad; Stephanie recommends Dr. Scholl for Thad's mysterious foot-odor problem. Marvin and Tammy get it on, while Michael and Diana ride the open bedsprings upstairs from Nate's important business presentation. Patty decides to become an astrologer.

General Hospital

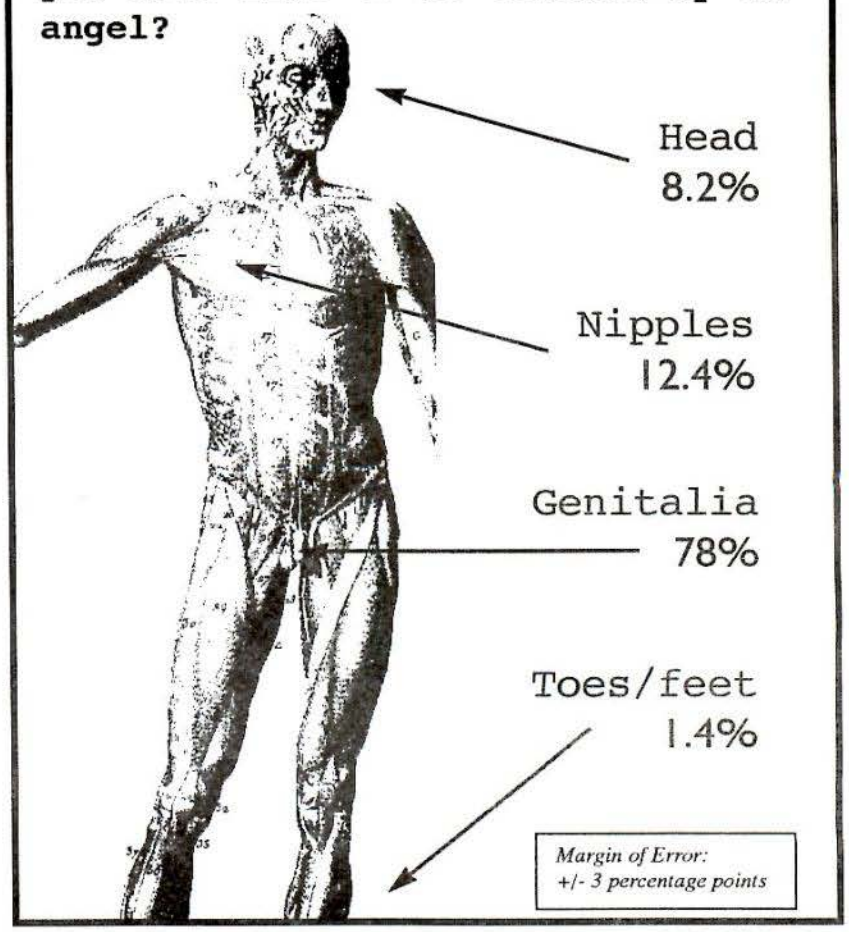
During a routine cancer screening, Dr. Pollard finds a cocaine-filled condom, which leads him to backslide into his addiction to Nonoxynol-9. Brady finally gets a date with Jacqueline, only to find out about her career as a phone solicitor for the Republican Party. Monica gets in a jam while working at the preserves factory, but Jeremy bails her out and gives her a stern tongue-lashing. While dumping medical waste at the beach, Jonas discovers a crate of mysterious vegetables which bestow superhuman abilities to all who consume them. Jm J. Bullock guest-stars. *—Ryun Patterson*

FUN FACTS

Kathie Lee Gifford is a raving bitch.

HITCH Vox Populi

On which part of your body would you most like to be touched by an angel?



Apocalypse When?

THE HITCH GUIDE TO THE END OF THE WORLD

By Ryun Patterson

Well the sky fell over cheap Korean monster movie scenery, and spilled into the mezzanine of a crushed capsule hotel.

Between the Disney abattoir and the chemical refinery, I knew I was in trouble, but I thought I was in Hell.

—Elvis Costello, "Tokyo Storm Warning"

Doomsday. Throughout history, man has seen the end.

Every culture and society on Earth has its own version of the end of the world.[1] From the Norse[2] idea of Ragnarok[3] to the rains of fire[4] foreseen in the Bible, the end of the world is a concept that people have pondered for untold centuries.[5] In the midst of this pondering, a vast array of predictions, prophecies and revelations has all predicted the end times in varied and unique ways.

WHENCE DOOMSDAY?

For all you Tupperware ladies,[6] pay close attention to the following. Many a lovely "burping" demonstration has been ruined by unsightly seas of blood and murderous rampages by the Antichrist, otherwise known as Dick Van Patten.[7]

From the Holy Bible to *The Omen*, visions of apocalypse have been a part of the genetic memory of our species. Prophecy, although fickle, can be rewarding (and in some cases, profitable) for those willing to step up to the pulpit and proclaim the doom of human civilization. A variety of religions, scholars and plain ol' nutjobs has predicted the apocalypse[8] in greatly different ways, but only a few have actually bitten the bullet of Armageddon and set an exact date.[9] The main thrust behind people setting dates for the exact end of the world seems to be guided by four basic principles:

1) Some sort of messiah is on his way, and when he gets here, he'll be pissed.

2) The world will be about 6,000 years old when the year 2000 comes a-calling, with each thousand years signifying one day of God's week of creation. The coming millennium, by this reasoning, will start the seventh day of rest, leading to 1,000 years of peace before we all get fried by Jesus' heat vision.[10]

3) Nuclear war will make the Earth a wasteland populated only by mutants, hot babes and suave fellers with big guns.[11]

4) It's just about damn[12] time.

The 16th-century archbishop of Armagh[13], James Ussher, calculated the precise date on which God created the world (Oct. 23, 4004 B.C.), by tallying "begats" in the Bible. Ussher's calculations[14] set the real millennium at 1987, and – besides that amounting to just a ton of sex[15] – it just wasn't true; otherwise, I wouldn't have gotten out of eighth grade,[16] and the world would know nothing of Tiffany or Debbie Gibson.

Those wacky *Witnesses of Jehovah*[17] *set a* ton of specific dates for Doomsday, but after, like, *seven* failed predictions, they've just resorted to saying, "Oh, pretty soon now. Want a *Watchtower*?"[18]

---

[1]Williams, Henry, "The end of the world in society and culture," pp. 331-33, Random House, 1983.

[2]That is to say, ancient Norwegian.

[3]The Norse believed that the end of the world would come when Yggdrasil, the tree of life, was cut down after an epic war between bestockinged gods with names like Thor, Odin, Loki, Surtur, and the like. Though every culture deserves to be respected in its own right, most scholars agree that this is possibly not true.

[4]And lonely times when men or women could not find an acquaintance.

This isn't unprecedented, for even that good ol' Guru of God, the Chieftain of Christ himself, Jack Van Impe, is sketchy when it comes to the "end time." He thinks maybe 2000 or 2001 or 2007, depending on when the warehouses full of his crappy "the end is nigh" videos finally get pushed on people, like my friend Kevin's grandma, who still believes the Hubble telescope was able to take pictures of heaven.[19]

Everyone's favorite Doomsday prophet, Fred Nostradamus,[20] has gained worldwide fame with his vague predictions that seem to sort of predict bad things that happen (even he, however, missed *ALF*[21]). He set the apocalypse at "the year 1999 and seven months,"[22] so, future brides, make it a June wedding.

The "sleeping prophet"[23] Edgar Cayce, who made a name for himself by channeling spirits of the dead, set his apocalyptic alarm clock[24] at 1999 as well, which means we should all start partying, like, now.[25]

The Hindus' wacky, non-Jesus-oriented calendar says the reincarnated Krishna[26] will show up in 2003 to establish a time of "dharma," or "righteousness." Certain sects[27] believe this will be followed by a period of "Greg," or "stupid sitcoms,"[28] but hey, they don't even believe in the baby Jesus, so what do they know?[29]

Though I am not *formally* recognized as a prophet,[30] I believe God's kingdom[31] will come on May 1, 2004. I'll be 30, and that's pretty freakin' old. As Roger Daltrey said, "I hope I die." Bob at the Oneida One-Stop in Green Bay said it will happen after the Cubs win the World Series and rap music is popular, so as far as he's concerned, we're just waiting for the Cubbies.

After Doomsday, Then What?

Now that the "when" of the apocalypse has been nailed down, the next question that begs to be answered is "What kind of wine goes well with peanut butter and jelly?"[32]

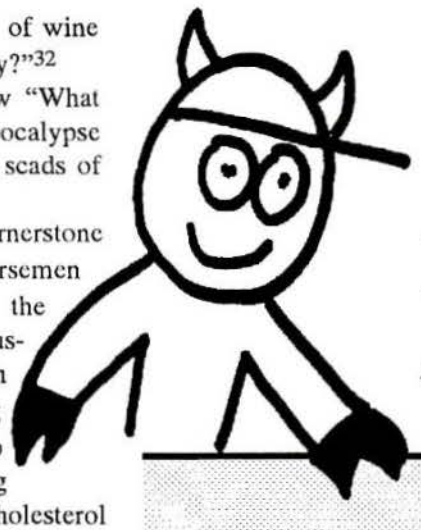
After that, we all want to know "What exactly will happen when the apocalypse comes?" Once again, there are just scads of theories.

The Bible, well known as the cornerstone of Christianity,[33] states that four horsemen of the apocalypse[34] will come to the earth as a signal of the end times, causing great sorrow and agony. Seven seals will then be broken,[35] signaling the coming of the Antichrist,[36] who will also do some bad things, leading to rains of fire, seas of blood, high cholesterol and eventually prompting the Dead[37] to rise from their graves and present themselves to the now-grown baby Jesus for a final judgment which determines who gets to enjoy the afterlife and who goes to heaven.[38] The Bible also has lots of other stuff like that, but most of it involves people "quoth"ing, "sayeth"ing or "begat"ing, so we'll just go on.[39]

Nostradamus claims "kings of terror" will fall from the sky and bring about The Big End,[40] and to many, this is a prediction of nuclear holocaust, although the translation is a little tricky, since he wrote his prophecies in French.[41] Popular culture, for the most part, isn't very imaginative when it come to the End of the World As We Know It. It's either nuclear war, natural disaster or aliens from another planet[42] that destroys the American way of life and makes everyone realize what a great gift it is to be alive and to be able to work together in a spirit of cooperation and harmony.[43]

Not that it wouldn't be neat to see a meteor smash into a major city, say, Cleveland,[44] but it's nothing compared to cool seas of blood or rains of fire or the Whore of Babylon[45] picking me up at a bar. There's just no creativity these days.

One group of people who *did* have it going on[46] were those kinky, cow-lovin'[47] Hindus.



Book o' Revel-ations Madd Libbs

Who's says there's no fun to be had in the demise of civilization? Grab a pen, make a list and then fill in the appropriate blanks on the next page! Rewriting Biblical history has never been so much fun!

1. past-tense verb
2. noun
3. landmark
4. animal
5. plural body part
6. another plural body part
7. plural noun
8. someone in the room
9. animal
10. plural body part
11. same plural body part
12. animal
13. sitcom
14. plural noun
15. plural body part
16. adjective
17. same sitcom
18. star of same sitcom
19. body part
20. place
21. object
22. a quality
23. pro sports team
24. animal
25. plural body part
26. past-tense verb
27. noun
28. noun
29. world leader
30. verb
31. adjective
32. opposite of adjective
33. noun
34. body part
35. movie star
36. cartoon character
37. plural noun
38. name of person in room

[5]Or possibly even decades. Or years.

[6]Commonly known as "Tupperwhores," "Tupperhoes" or "Courtesans of the Burping God," in ancient Sumer.

[7]Lovable patriarch of *6(66) is Enough*.

[8]From the Greek "apokalyptein," meaning "to reveal."

[9]That reminds me of a joke: There was this bus driver whose name was Jim, and he drove the bus on *Sesame Street*. Well, one day he was driving down Sesame Street and a funny thing happened. At the first stop, he picked up a pair of *huge* women. "Hi, I'm Patty," they both said. Jim noted the freak occurrence and drove to the next stop.

[10]There are two flaws to this, however. First of all, why would God, who's pretty much known to be a sneaky bastard, set things up so easily for us to figure out? I think He's got something up His sleeve. Secondly, the world ain't 6,000 years old! There are these new things called "fossils" that prove huge beasts – strangely called "dinosaurs" and "Rush Limbaugh" – lived not thousands, but *millions* of years ago, long before thoughts of Doomsday or even *Dance Fever* entered into anyone's head. As far as the heat vision goes, did you know that Kalil was the name the ancient Jews had for their messiah? Weird.

[11]Maxwell, Mad, "Throw Another Mutant on the Barbie: A Memoir," pp. 1-2.

[12]Excuse my French.

[13]Hey, Armagharena!

MADD LIBBS
(CONTINUED)

Rev. 13

[1] And I __(1)__ upon the __(2)__ of the __(3)__, and saw a __(4)__ rise up out of the sea, having seven __(5)__ and ten __(6)__, and upon his horns ten __(7)__, and upon his heads the name of __(8)__.
[2] And the beast which I saw was like unto a __(9)__, and his __(10)__ were as the __(11)__ of a __(12)__, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and __(13)__ gave him his power, and his seat, and great __(14)__.
[3] And I saw one of his __(15)__ as it were wounded to death; and his __(16)__ wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.
[4] And they worshipped __(17)__ which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is __(18)__? Who is able to make war with him?
[5] And there was given unto him a __(19)__ speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.
[10] He that leadeth into __(20)__ shall go into __(20)__: he that killeth with the __(21)__ must be killed with the __(21)__. Here is the __(22)__ and the faith of the __(23)__.
[11] And I beheld another __(24)__ coming up out of the earth; and he had two __(25)__ like a lamb, and he __(26)__ as a dragon.
[13] And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh __(27)__ come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,
[15] And he had power to give __(28)__ unto the image of __(29)__, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not __(30)__ the image of the beast should be killed.
[16] And he causeth all, both small and great, __(31)__ and __(32)__, free and bond, to receive a __(33)__ in their right hand, or in their __(34)__:
[17] And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the __(33)__, or the name of __(35)__, or the number of his name.
[18] Here is __(36)__. Let him that hath __(37)__ count the number of __(38)__: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

When that koo-koo Daddy-O Avatar of Krishna comes a-knockin', we'll all be rockin', at least according to legend.[48]

Things start out rather innocently, as blood will rain upon towns, villages and forests. But look out! Poor-quality coins will then be used as currencies![49] The males of goats and oxen will grow mammary glands, which will then be milked![50] Blood will flow from the limbs of elephants and horses![51] Many incurable diseases will be present![52] Best of all, a man will have *10 women* after him,[53] which will result in extreme behavior[54] among humans! Bring it on home, Krishna! Hinduism is the -*ism* for all of us![55] Let's all get a dot[56] today![57]

But seriously, as the millennium approaches, we should take stock of what the future may hold. Put some plastic on the windows[58], batten down the hatches and get those nine guest bedrooms gussied up[59]. The end is coming, and woe be he[60] who gets caught with his[61] pants down.[62]

H

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[14]Ussher, James, "Nostra-*who*?," pp.45-67.

[15]Well, 2,000 pounds of sex can be unnerving at first, but hey, it's the Bible.

[16]So Jim went on to the next stop. Up walked a smartly dressed young man who dropped his correct change in the slot and said, "Hi, my name is Ross, and I'm special." Jim thought this was an altogether nice gesture on the young man's part, and he proceeded to the next stop. In walked a professional-type guy in a tweed suit and a bowler hat. "Hello, chap," he said. "My name's Keyes. Lester Keyes." Jim nodded nicely to him and drove on.

[17]"I know who you are. I saw what Jehovah did."

[18]Dylan, Robert.

[19]It seems you can't even believe the *Weekly World News* anymore.

[20]Originally named Michele, constant torment forced him toward a more manly name.

[21]Alien Life Form.

[22]Nostradamus, F, "Begat *This*, Ussher!," pp. 223-337.

[23]Born in Hopkinsville, Ky., Edgar Cayce made his living bilking old ladies through his gift of "forseeing" the future and talking to spirits while apparently in a trance. Sounds like he is the only person who actually made a living through napping.

[24]Incidentally, also the name of a band known for the song "Incense and Antichrist."

[25]Nelson, P.R., "1999."

[26]So Jim and his passengers go cruising down Sesame Street. Whilst this is happening, Jim looks into that special bus driver's mirror and sees that the whole crew has their shoes and socks off and is picking huge bunions on the soles of their feet! Jim so abhors this sight that he smashes the bus into a gasoline tanker, which explodes and kill everyone but Jim.

[27]Sounds like "sex."

[28]Is this a redundant phrase?

[29]Just you wait and see, you racist.

[30]In America. The Honduras is a different story.

[31]Formerly known as "The Magic Kingdom."

[32]I'm asking you. I'm stumped.

[33]Van Impe, Jack, "The Bible: Cornerstone of Christianity," cover.

[34]Otherwise known as The Spice Girls. Yes, there are five of them, but if you think of Sporty Spice as the pale horse on which Death rides, it all makes sense.

[35]Poor little seals.

[36]"Nicholas! Did you rise up from the depths and smite your teacher again?"

[37]The obvious joke would be about the Grateful Dead. Sorry.

[38]So as the emergency services are carting Jim off to the hospital, a police officer named Jeff comes up to him and says, "We can't identify any of the people on the bus, Jim. They're burned to a crisp. Can you give me any clues as to who was on that bus?"

[39]As you can tell, I'd rather be sleeping.

[40]My only friend, the end.

[41]An alternate translation proposed by scholars would be "The King of Pop falling from the sky," and that doesn't sound so bad.

[42]Mars.

[43]Sounds more like the Communist way of life, doesn't it?

[44]Allen, I., "Cleveland Rocks," pp. 1-666.

[45]Who, incidentally, holds the sales record for Tupperware Corp.

[46]Like Sergei Fabiev, a Russian spy captured in 1967 after stealing the blueprints of the Concorde from the French. The Russians actually flew their version of the Concorde, the TU-144, three months before the Europeans flew the Concorde.

[47]If you can't love farm animals, what can you love?

[48]Starring Tom Cruise.

[49]That could never happen here. I melted down all my money the other day. I had a big pile of ashes in my living room. I thought, "Wow, all these ashes are worth what my money was originally worth, and now they're pocket-sized!" Then a big guy came in, and he was mad. We fought, and, needless to say, he kicked my ash.

[50]Evidenced by the late Chris Farley.

[51]Neat.

[52]Does this sound familiar?

[53]You mean that *isn't* a normal thing? Imagine that!

[54]Sex.

[55]Right behind Marxism.

[56]Actually called a "tikka," these dots represent the "third eye" of spiritual sight. Also located by the pituitary gland.

[57]At least pretty soon.

[58]You know how hard it is to get blood rain off of windows?

[59]For all the extra sex the end times will bring.

[60]Or she.

[61]Or her.

[62]So Jim props himself up on the gurney and says, "Let's see: two all-beef Patties, special Ross, Lester Keyes picking bunions on a Sesame Street bus."

Just one of the four of the famed 'Horsemen of the Apocalypse.' This one is known to most of the world as 'Scary Spice.'

HITCH

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"The Critics Agree!"

By
Steve Hunt

"Outrageously funny!" –Paul Wunder, on *Flubber*

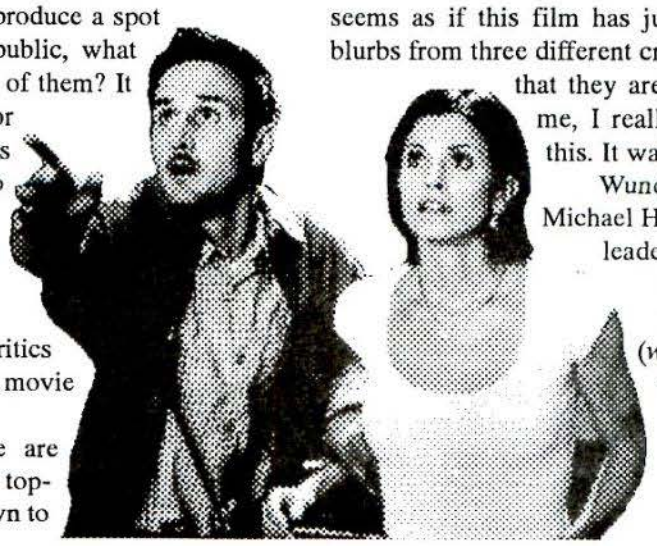
"A stylish thriller! Powerfully intense, one of the year's best films!" –Ron Brewington, on *The Jackal*

"A timely, pulse-pounding 8 out of 10!" –Susan Granger, on *The Peacemaker*

"WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL!" –Jim Svedja, on *Fools Rush In*

It does not take any sort of deductive, logical-thinking person to realize that whenever a motion picture's advertisement sports accolades sprawled by one or more of the folks above, that the picture will probably be crap. *Flubber*, *The Jackal*, *The Peacemaker* and *Fools Rush In* were all major flops critically, and yet who would know from such glowing, glorious comments?

Yes, these are very bad movies, and it is not so insulting that these four non-critical critics only like bad movies as it is that they seemingly like *every* movie. Thus, if you are the director of, say, a film such as *Red Corner* or *MouseHunt*, and it has come time for you to produce a spot that will appeal to the general public, what else could you do but turn to one of them? It is a practice that has gone on for numerous years, and as long as there are types of people who enjoy sitcoms and talk shows, there will be people who will fall for this gag.



"Uh-oh! It's Paul Wunder!" scream Arquette and Cox.

Madge: "Honey! Look! The critics agree that *Sequel 2* is the blow up movie of the year!"

Frank: "Gee Madge! Those are sure good marks! Let me grab my top-coat, and we will giddy-up on down to the local cinema, and see *Sequel 2*, and maybe we can get some popped-corn! "

While Madge and Frank might find *Sequel 2* semi-tolerable – as they are dull-minded folk – others will hate it. Yes, they will hate it with a passion that can only be rivaled by my dislike for the phrase "Raise the roof," accompanied by that silly, arms-in-air motion. This practice definitely raises ethical questions in my mind. Surely these promoters know what they are doing. They *must* know that the "agreeing critics," as we shall call them, like *everything*, and plastering these rave reviews of theirs across newspaper ad headings add *nothing* to their silly films.

It does, however, get worse. I have seen what follows performed three different times, most recently on the television spot for the film which pushes the limits of mediocrity, *Scream 2*. This really has to be seen to be fully appreciated, but hopefully you'll get the gist of it. After a brief intro, three blurbs quickly flash across the screen: "Twice as scary as the first," followed by two more quotes, slightly different in context and shown as if they were from different critics.

But no! *All three* are from Mr. Wunder, and while it seems as if this film has just received three rave review blurbs from three different critics, careful inspection reveals that they are all from good ol' Paul. Trust me, I really, *really* chortled when I saw this. It was beautiful.

Wunder is kind of like Anthony Michael Hall was in *Sixteen Candles*: the leader of the dweebs. Wunder's web site is laugh-a-minute fun; do check it out sometime (*www.pwunder.com*). His intro to

the site is verbatim, as follows: "These are reviews of movies that will not open for some time. It is my purpose to bring you the first news about new and unusual motion pictures. If this were strictly a REVIEW site, you would find both positive and negative reviews. However, this is a site that will bring you your first look at some of my up-and-coming favorites. Thus, reviews found here will always be positive in one way or another. ENJOY!"

Granger's Glamour Shot

So, to my knowledge, Wunder truly *does* like *everything* that he sees. Some of the films included on his site – again, chock full of reviews positive in one way or another – are: *Mimic* (seriously), *The Fifth Element* (ohhhh, how I hated that film), *The Game* (silly, silly, silly) and *The Lost World: Jurassic Park.*

The fact that these films are included in a list of tolerable movies is bad enough; however, Wunder adds to the gut-wrenching pain with a writing style *all* his own. There is much more to it than Paul's love affair with the exclamation point, which he uses is seemingly every sentence. There are silly comments, and just *heaps* of improper grammar.

For example, take this excerpt from his *The Fifth Element* review, commenting on Milla Jovovich's "Wonderful!!!" performance: "She has indeed a future as a fine actor."

For starters, Paul, *no*, this *Kuffs* vet has *no* future as a fine actor, and secondly, Paul, where is your exclamation point!!! This film that I hated more than the catchphrase "Show me the money!," Wunder went on to hail as possibly better than *Blade Runner*. Whoa!

Something else that I found quite funny – in a tangent that could be rivaled only by me suddenly going into a discussion on the advantages of cooking with cilantro – Wunder states that he found it very "neat" that there were so many African-Americans in key roles in *The Fifth Element*. Hee-hee!

Ron Brewington of the (fictitious?) American Urban Radio Network recently had a blurb on the alleged film *Free Willy 3* that read, "A real treat for the entire family." I have seen a lot of Brewington in the papers and on commercials lately, as apparently the film companies have made him their favorite filmlover as of late.

Willy 3 reeked of Granger Danger when I first heard it was coming out, but when I checked the paper, Ron had taken the honor, perhaps because the sneaky think-tanks at Warner Bros. know to rotate the four a bit, as to keep the less observant element, well, less observant.

Susan Granger, film critic/crack whore, recently hailed the George-Clooney-vs.-a- missile vehicle *The Peacemaker* as "a timely, pulse-pounding 8 out of 10!" Timely only, perhaps, in that it came out on the same day that the equally entertaining *Battle of the Sexes on Ice* debuted on FOX. To complement her review of the dreadful *Peacemaker*, her video pick of the week was *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, which seems to be the choice flick of the four for '97. The rest of us, however, are privy to the information that *The Lost World* was a really, *really* horrible motion picture.

While I imagine we will continue to see this practice – as our society continues to be filled with gullible, uneducated sorts – one thing we will never see is one of the agreeing critics' raves parlayed with one by Roger Ebert or other competent critics. Promoters know that if the likes of Ebert approves of their film, then resorting to a Granger blurb would be totally foolish, just as restaurateurs know not to serve Ramen noodles with lobster.

Peacenik Clooney

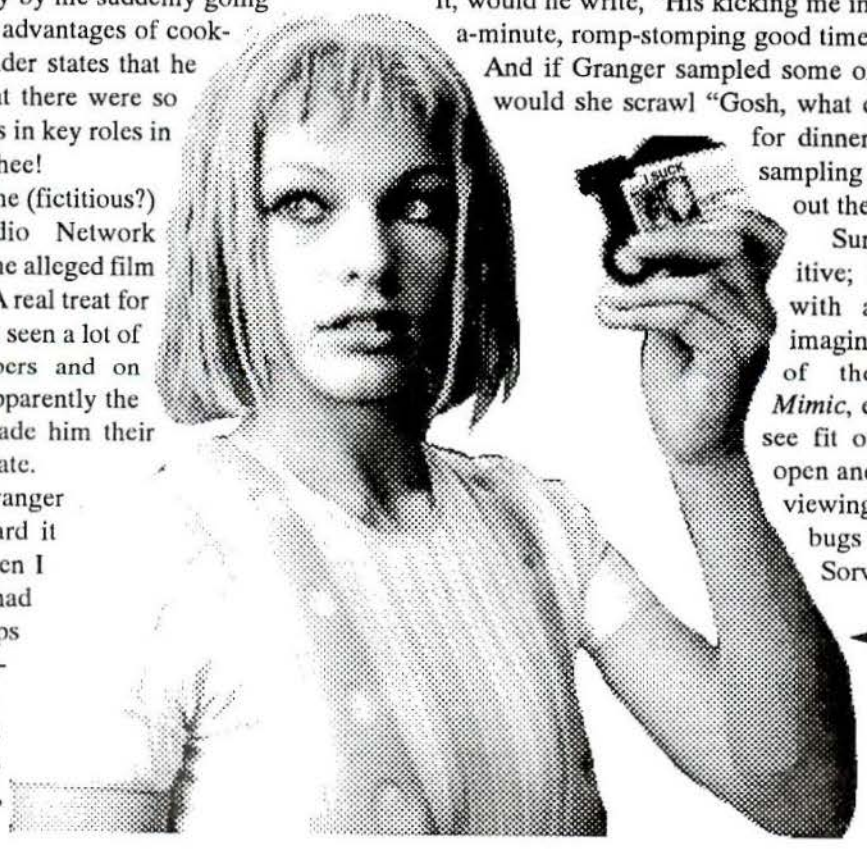
Actually, I have seen something close recently. The day before *As Good as It Gets* came out, an ad for it carried a Wunder blurb, but the next day, an Ebert blurb and several other blurbs by reputable critics replaced it. All I can imagine is that there was a *serious* deadline, and the promoter knew he could get a Wunder blurb ... or he was playing a funny prank. I have not seen this film yet, I hear it is pretty good, but it is still scarred for life with its brief association with Wunder.

One last thing I wonder about these squirrels is, are their tastes in other things similar to their tastes in film? For example, could I kick Mr. Brewington in the jimmy and of it, would he write, "His kicking me in the balls was a thrill-a-minute, romp-stomping good time!!!"

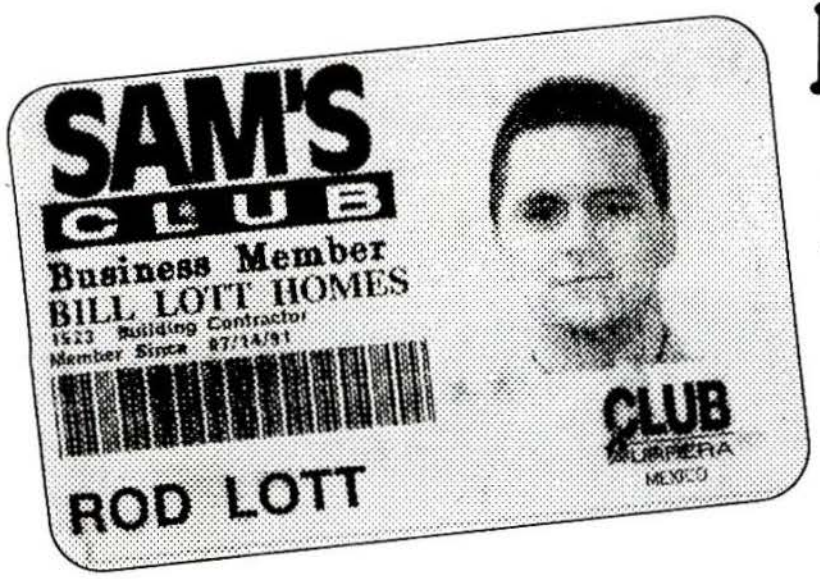
And if Granger sampled some of my cat's used litter, would she scrawl "Gosh, what did that little kitty eat for dinner? I must recommend sampling her stool to everyone out there!!!"

Sure, it is good to be positive; I will not argue that with anyone. However, I imagine that upon a viewing of the Wunder-approved *Mimic*, even Zig Ziglar would see fit only to slit his wrists open and lay down dead, after viewing two hours of large bugs wrestling with Mira Sorvino.

H



The futureless Milla Jovoich, in the futuristic *Fifth Element*



I Never Met a Microwaved Meatball I Didn't Like

My Saturday was a typical Saturday, except that Uncle Sam wanted *me* ... to taste his nuggets.

For me, odds are the weekend kicks off with an early-morning string of mindless errands, as mundane as heading from the post office to the bank. (With Saturday morning cartoons long a thing of the past, what else is there to do?) Yet one late-September morn, because my wife's car somehow had accumulated four nails among its bed of tires, I had to go to one of the few places on Earth that I loathe.

I had to go to Sam's Wholesale Club.

I don't loathe Sam's because it is a members-only (and what an exclusive club it is) offshoot of noted satanic purveyor Wal-Mart, although that's more than enough reason. No, I hate Sam's because it:

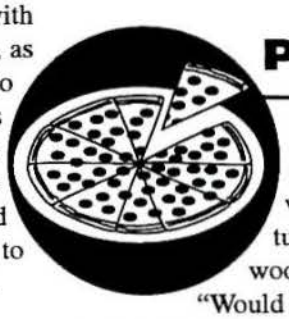
- ☞ is busy;
- ☞ is crowded;
- ☞ is busy and crowded with a Wal-Mart-kind-of people;
- ☞ is not located within a sprinting distance of my house; and
- ☞ sells *everything* in bulk. I mean, who needs *500* paper plates at *once*? Or in *life*?

But they *do* sell quality tires cheaper than anyone else, so I make all my large rubber purchases there, even if I have to get them off the shelf myself, thus dirtying my hands.[1]

The simple task of changing tires takes the ol' racehorses at Sam's a good freaking hour, even if you are the day's first customer. When forced to wait and kill time at Sam's, I do so by browsing the videos, the books and the bulk candied treats. This time, that took all of 10 minutes.

But God was with me. That day, you see, was "Sample Day" at Sam's.

Maybe every day is Sample Day at Sam's; I'm proud to say I don't frequent the place enough to say with a reasonable degree of assurance. But it sure seemed special on this particular morning, because as far as the eye could see, standing in comfortable shoes in front of each row of deep freezes was a procession of white-haired, grandmotherly types with chocolate-brown smocks, sanitary gloves and a *serious* need to feed.



Pizza

My first stop was at Ethel's[2] corner, where she cut inch-wide slices of pizza, puncturing each with a stylish wooden toothpick.

"Would you like a sample?" she asked, so invitingly, yet failing to clarify the wares in question.

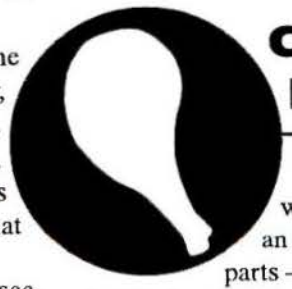
"What is it?" I said, although I can identify pizza via the sense of hearing alone.

"It's our stuffed-crust pizza."

"What's it stuffed with?" I asked, playing dumb.

Pause. "I don't rightly know. It's our stuffed-crust pizza," she responded, in classic, these-go-to-11 style.

My one bite of the pie left me satisfied. The sauce was tangy, yet never overpresumptious. The orphaned pepperoni carried the right amount of kick and crispness. Only the slightly gummy cheese stuffed within the crust elicited any negative thought.



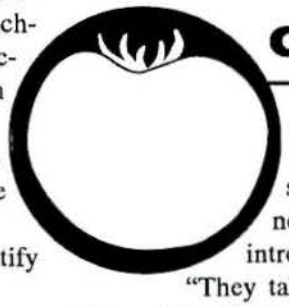
Chicken Nuggets

Located across from Ethel was Myrna, who had laid out an array of processed poultry parts – or, as her painstakingly and shakily handwritten sign read, "breaded chicken nuggets" – upon a toaster oven tray covered in foil. A secondary sign (fashioned from a once-folded index card) propped up against said oven warned: "Hot Food! Hot Plate!"

"Would you like to try a breaded chicken nugget?" Myrna asked.

"No, thanks," I refused. The alleged "nuggets" looked to be burned; their breading rocky and brown. In short, they looked like the stinky tonsils I had removed in December of '93.

As I passed right on by, I could hear Myrna humming Barry Manilow. I don't know which Manilow tune was emanating from her lovely lips, but trust me, it had to be Manilow.



Calzones

On down toward the breakfast aisle, Pat was taking her sweet-ass time slicing up newborn meatball calzones to introduce to the world.

"They take a *lonnng* time to make," she explained to the awaiting crowd, earning no points for salesmanship. Once the calzone had finished cooking, Pat was careful to dissect it so as each piece would contain a whole, undisturbed meatball. She failed often. I had to circle around the freezer a few times before she was ready to give out the goods.

Handing me a generous-sized portion on a piece of foil *and* a napkin, neither of which could contain the river of grease, she said, "It is *hot*." The steam would've been my first clue.

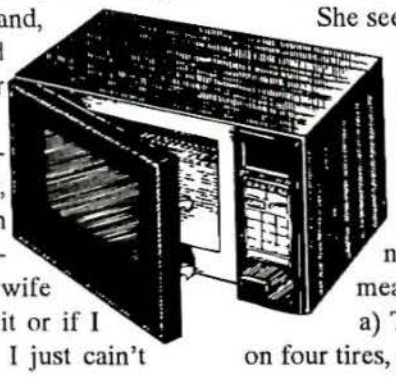
Taking heed of Pat's warning, I browsed through the tools (by this time, I was *scraping*) as I took small, well-spaced bites. The pizza-dough shell of the calzone struck me as sweet, which was not an altogether unpleasant thing. I was surprised at how well the combination of melted cheese, simmering sauce and plump meatballs tasted, especially for a food item one must heat by using a disposable cardboard pouch. Upon final swallow, I determined that I was sold, so I returned to Pat's station.

"That was good," I said, pouring on the positive feedback. "Where do you sell this?" I wanted to know.

She gazed at me blankly, as if I had asked, "Can you explain the Pythagorem theorem to me?"

"Say I wanted to buy this," I elaborated. "Where would I find them?"

Memory kicking in, Pat pointed me the way, *just as a squatty, elfin-like, middle-aged* man sauntered up to her stand, hiked up his pants and filled his fat hand with three of her four samples.



Outside Sam's doors earlier, I had spotted this squatty, elfin-like, middle-aged man smoking up a storm and complaining to a stranger, "My wife says, 'Do this,' and if I do it or if I don't do it, she yell at me. I just cain't win."

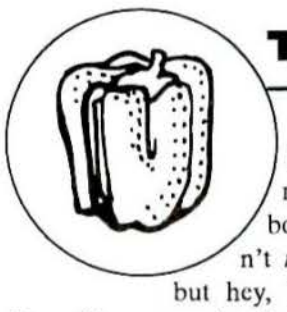
Evidently, this squatty, elfin-like, middle-aged man was throwing caution to the wind by loading up on free meatballs at the ripe hour of 10, despite the obvious tongue-lashing he would receive upon returning home for spoiling his lunch.

Chicken Nuggets (Again)

Making a return trip past the nugget display, the old biddy still could be heard humming up a storm. Was it "Copacabana"? "Mandy"? "I'm a Pepper"?

"Would you like to try—"

"No-ho-ho."



Taquitos

In the past five years, I've probably eaten more than a dozen boxes of these, so I didn't *need* to sample them, but hey, I'm a taquito whore. You offer me taquito, I eat taquito.

The taquito, for the record, is just like a beef burrito, only rolled tight enough to fit in the smallest of crevices, such as the eyeholes of Sam Walton's corpse. Delinex's taquitos are available in chicken as well, but I've yet to try them. The beef rocks with a ferocious spicyness that stays with you for hours. They taste great, and you'll be tasting them long after they're gone (and even longer if you dress it up with a can of El Paso enchilada sauce and some shredded cheddar). It's damn fine eating, señor. Just don't expect to be kissed within a 24-hour period.

Orange Juice

Adjacent to the tools section, Martha – have I used that name yet? – poured Dixie cup upon Dixie cup of freshly squeezed O.J., presumably straight from Florida.

"Thanks," I said, and walked away.

She seemed peeved that I didn't barrage her with questions about her product. Well, what the hell – it's *orange juice!*

Finally, the wunderkinds in the automotive department called my name over the intercom, which meant one of two things:

a) They had indeed successfully put on four tires, or

b) Like last time, it took them 45 minutes to figure out they had told me the buy an incorrect size of tire.

Luckily, it was the former, and I – Discover Card charged and tummy full – headed home ... for lunch.

H

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[1]See "Ya Down Wit' OCD?," **HITCH** 16.

[2]Names have been made up because had I asked, I would still be there, listening to stories about Rosie the Riveter, Harry Truman and the Glenn Miller Orchestra.

Letter to Sam's Minions

One of the neat things (okay, the *only* thing) about Wal-Mart's home page is that you can e-mail the corporation direct and give your feedback. They promise to respond. Well, six months later, I'm still waiting.

I was just wondering why Wal-Mart attracts the trashiest people. Every time I go in there (with much reluctance), I have to take a shower afterwards because some unpleasant person has brushed against my skin. While I cannot prove it, I think I contracted head lice once when this guy bumped into me and his cap fell off.

Do you have any kind of corporate statement about this? Could you possibly raise your prices a little so that this undesirable element of the population would stay away?

Thanks for your response. —R. Lott, Oklahoma City

BACK ISSUE BLOWOUT!

All back issues just $3.50 each! Mail cash, check or money order to: HITCH P.O. Box 23621 Oklahoma City, OK 73123-2621

#8 • AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1995 • Fast food horrors, chiropractors exposed, McDonald's fun facts, Gulf War injury photos, the Hootie-O-Matic and interviews with Leatherface, Tommy James and some guy from *Baywatch.* (44 pgs.)

#9 • OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1995 • Country music: the root of all evil, my life as an underwear model, plasma donation as an occupation, *TV Guide* and you, drugstore horrors, Monkee trouble, summer movie crap, cow sex. (44 pgs.)

#13 • FALL 1996 • Visiting the *Twister* Museum, an interview with the pet psychic, an interview with Andrew "Dice" Clay, *Reel Wild Cinema*, playing bingo, Barry Williams: a very Brady dork, *KISS: The Movie*, gay Batman, a telemarketing investigation, Robert Downey Jr. addiction roulette, dinosaur fun and a free presidential election board game. *These babies are going fast!* (64 pgs.)

#15 • SPRING 1997 • The tortures of Lamaze class, complete with stomach-churning how-to illustrations, revisiting Twin Peaks, the **HITCH** Guide to Employment, a he-man adventure in Hawaii, interview with an Afrin junkie, Shazam! incomplete episode guide, war of the chicken fry and the infamous Julia-Roberts-in-a-towel letter. My, do we need to unload some of these. (64 pgs.)

Also available: #3, 7, 10, 14, 16

Hi Diddle Dee Dee

(A Bachelor's Life for Me)

By Ryun Patterson

Chicks dig me.

What else is there to say? I'm a natural born swinger, with a penchant for a fine cigar, a vodka martini and a saucy dame. While much of my natural savoir-faire (it's everywhere!) is God-given, there are certain things that every "normal" (read: non-irresistible to the opposite sex) person can do to become a libidinous dynamo.

the pickup

Picking up chicks is a simple proposition, if you've got the right proposition, that is. My line, which only works for those named after me, goes something like this:

Me: "You know, I get the feelin' I might just be a constellation."

***Beautiful* Baby:** "Why is that, might I ask?"

Me: "Because every time I go out with a beautiful baby, she says, 'Oh, Ryun!'"

There are three possible responses to this sure-fire line, and they're all good. She can:

a) Take me back to her place and, ba da bing, ba da boom, we'll have a "conversation."

b)Throw a drink in my face, as if to quench the Shatneresque fire in my loins, which she senses with lust.

c) Get up and leave, in which case I go to the so-called "Le Pew" maneuver that consists of chasing her until she relents to my pheremonal assault.

As I said, it's all good.

the pad

Once the girl's phone number is procured, nothing stokes the furnace of love like a groovy dinner at my Venus flytrap of a bachelor pad (see the recipe at right).

Pre-date preparations include:

• Stocking the refrigerator with caviar, oysters and a nice big leg of lamb (for later).

• Selecting the tunes for the romantic encounter, which should either be classical (but not the "1812 Overture," as the cannons can be disconcerting) or instrumental jazz.

• Sprucing up the pad and preparing a knockout of a romantic dinner. I make a mean rack of lamb with mixed peppercorn crust, but spaghetti works in a pinch for the financially strapped. Plus, there's that whole *Lady and the Tramp* thing, which chicks indubitably dig.

• Getting dressed in some nice slacks a nice swinger's shirt and a jacket.

• Spritzing yourself with your favorite cologne (anything that says "musk" is good).

• Constructing a facade of caring sensibility *(THIS IS CRITICAL)*.

the ruse

Once the chicky-babe arrives, it's showtime. Conversation is of utmost importance. Contrary to popular belief, nodding and feigning interest are not the only keys to an amorous conquest. No, you must portray yourself as a man like no other, a masculine force of good in a world of charlatans. Though they are prized possessions, I will impart some of my gems of conversation with all of you, for your sake:

• "I've just met you, yet I feel like I know you so well."

• "Is it hard being beautiful *and* intelligent?"

• "A relationship can only work when the 'we' is made up of two whole, sensitive 'me's. I've just recently found out what it means to be 'me.' Can you appreciate that?"

• "Have you seen *The Bridges of Madison County*? Clint really showed me how to live *and* love with his work in that fine, fine film."

the move

Now that the groundwork has been laid, it's your turn. Move to the couch (the on-ramp to the boudoir) and

pick out a movie to watch. If she can handle subtitles, pick out a depressing subtitled film like *Raise the Red Lantern*, starring Gong Li. It will make her weepy, plus that chick is one hot tamale.

Make no physical overture unless prompted. Once it is over, say, "Movies like that are the reason film exists as an art form. They portray life as it really is ... full of lies and discontent. I wish I could change that about the world, I really do." If the spicy wench hasn't pounced upon you yet, it's time to push your hand.

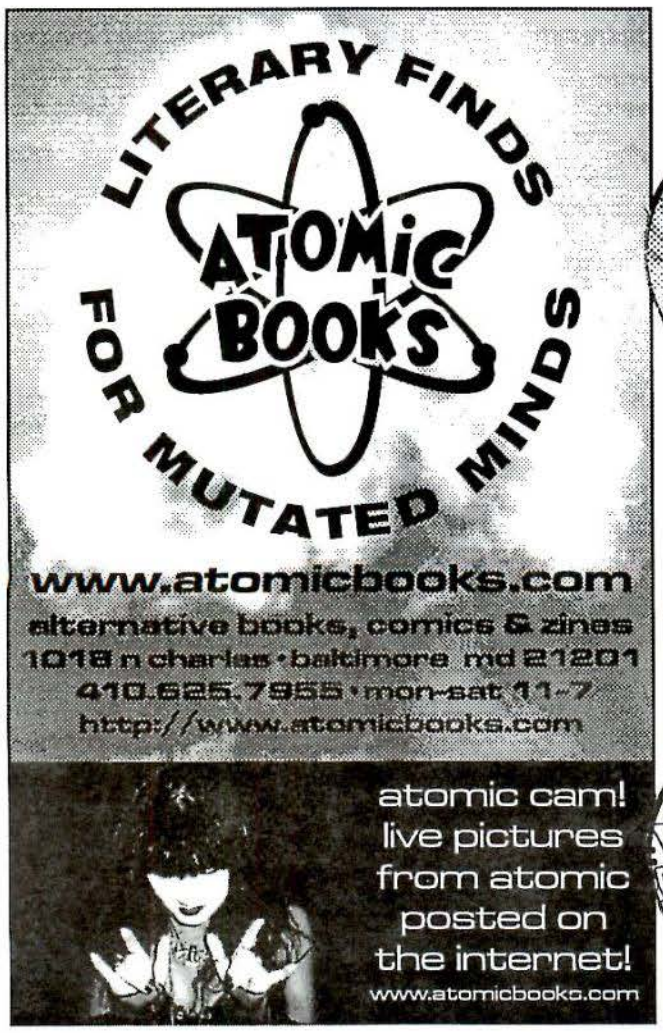
Nodding and feigning interest are not the only keys to an amorous conquest.

No, not liquor. Well, maybe some champagne. But it's time to put the pressure on her. Say this: "Well, I really appreciate you coming over. I've been feeling down lately because my grandma's sick, and I love her so much. Maybe, if you had a good time, we can do this again. Would you like to see her picture? It's on my nightstand."

Make sure your grandma's picture is on the nightstand, and not that new issue of *Things That Go 'Baa' in the Night* magazine. Make no move. You won't have to.

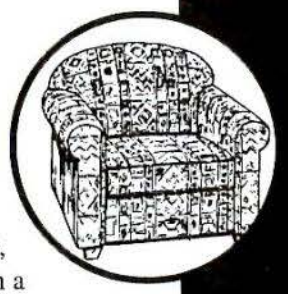
Make sure your bathroom is clean, and always keep a sanitized toothbrush in the medicine cabinet, "Just in case my cousins need somewhere to stay for the funeral."

Adios, and happy hunting, my now fully trained fishers of chicks. **H**

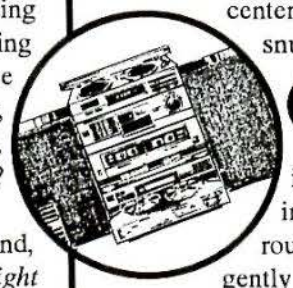


Preenin' the Pad:

Six *Essentials* for *Fabricating* the *Ultimate* Chick-Snaring *Bachelor* Lair



1 ***Furniture*** Trust me, chicks don't dig bean bags, my man, unless they are part of a retro "theme room" with cement and plywood shelving, macrame potholders and plenty of beadwork. Go with a Spartan appearance, with a futon or couch, a decent entertainment center and, if luxury prevails, a nice rocker/recliner for snuggling.



2 ***Tunes*** Go with components here. A bunch of matte black boxes linked with cords and wires make you a veritable electrical wizard in the eyes of a woman, for they know not the intricacies of RCA cables, D/A converters and surround sound. Pop in some subdued sax music, stir gently and *voila!* Sex galore.

3 ***Conversation Pieces*** Nothing makes a woman melt more than a telling description of a favorite stuffed animal or a humorous tale about how you managed to get Jackson Browne to record an answering machine message for you ("Well, we're both, you know, sensitive guys."). Discuss the Bible on your nightstand. Read the *Tao Te Ching*. Talk about cats. Just stay away from discussing the upcoming sex you're about to have or the Justice League. She doesn't care that the alternate world in which the *Super Friends* were villains still gives you nightmares.

4 ***Art*** For me, I only have two pieces of art on my austere walls: A framed Elvis Costello picture disc which I received for my birthday from my dad (the ladies really groove on it!) and a poster from the original '60s *Batman* movie signed by Adam West *and* Burt Ward. Just seeing that thing makes me realize that no matter how big of a dork I am, wearing tights will help me get lucky.

5 ***Fine Literature*** **HITCH** magazines lying on the coffee table or nightstand always spark some interest. Problems can arise, however, when the fine wench actually reads the things, at which time her interest turns to either:

a) Rod
b) Ken
c) Bob Clipson
d) The Pope (I've got a great hat reserved for just this eventuality.)

6 ***Flowers*** A couple of tulips in a vase on the dining room table will remind her of the blossoming, the unfolding, the expression of humanity, that a true man can bring to her. Plus they're pretty, and good smellin', too.

WON'T YOU TAKE ME TO

By Jamie Rogers

NIKETOWN?

The rain was a bit colder, and the traffic a bit harrier, but we landed a parking spot right in front of the tall, gray building. Except for the bricks encasing new athletic shoes like time capsules, hidden speakers pounding with spaceship noises and an enormous silhouette of Michael Jordan in mid-marvelous lay-up, the exterior the place could have mistaken for an old-fashioned bank.

How oddly appropriate. Welcome to Niketown, Portland.

"Where's the door?" asked my companion, Joe Rogers.

There was no "door," *per se*; simply a doorway with a sign stating the revised holiday hours of operation. A blonde standing in this passage wore black pants, a yellow fleece vest and some nametag, but her name I cannot remember. She greeted us.

"So, what exactly is this place? I've never been here," I admitted to her. Visions of Spike Lee commercials danced in my head, borne of a fellow KU Jayhawk who had told me, "You *gotta* go there." I envisioned basketball courts you could play on, museum-esque exhibits on famous feet.

"Oh, it's a retail store. But there's some pretty cool stuff in there, too," she said.

More noises emanated from inside as Joe and I entered. I'd never seen anything quite like it, but many of the individual pieces seemed familiar. It looked like a Disney Store made for sports fans. A giant projection screen played a commercial of Joe Namath holding a shoe at the breakfast table, presumably with his wife. The store layout was open, like a strip mall, with a series of specific shops each shelling out a specific kind of clothing. A small balcony and overhead walkway led to a second level.

The benches and shelves looked as if they'd been designed by the same trendy folks who've brought you the interiors of Starbucks and Einstein Bagels, but with a jock twist. The bench legs were giant golf balls, the shelves were pieces of backboards.

As per his usual priority in *any* place we travel to, Joe immediately asked, "Where's the bathroom?"

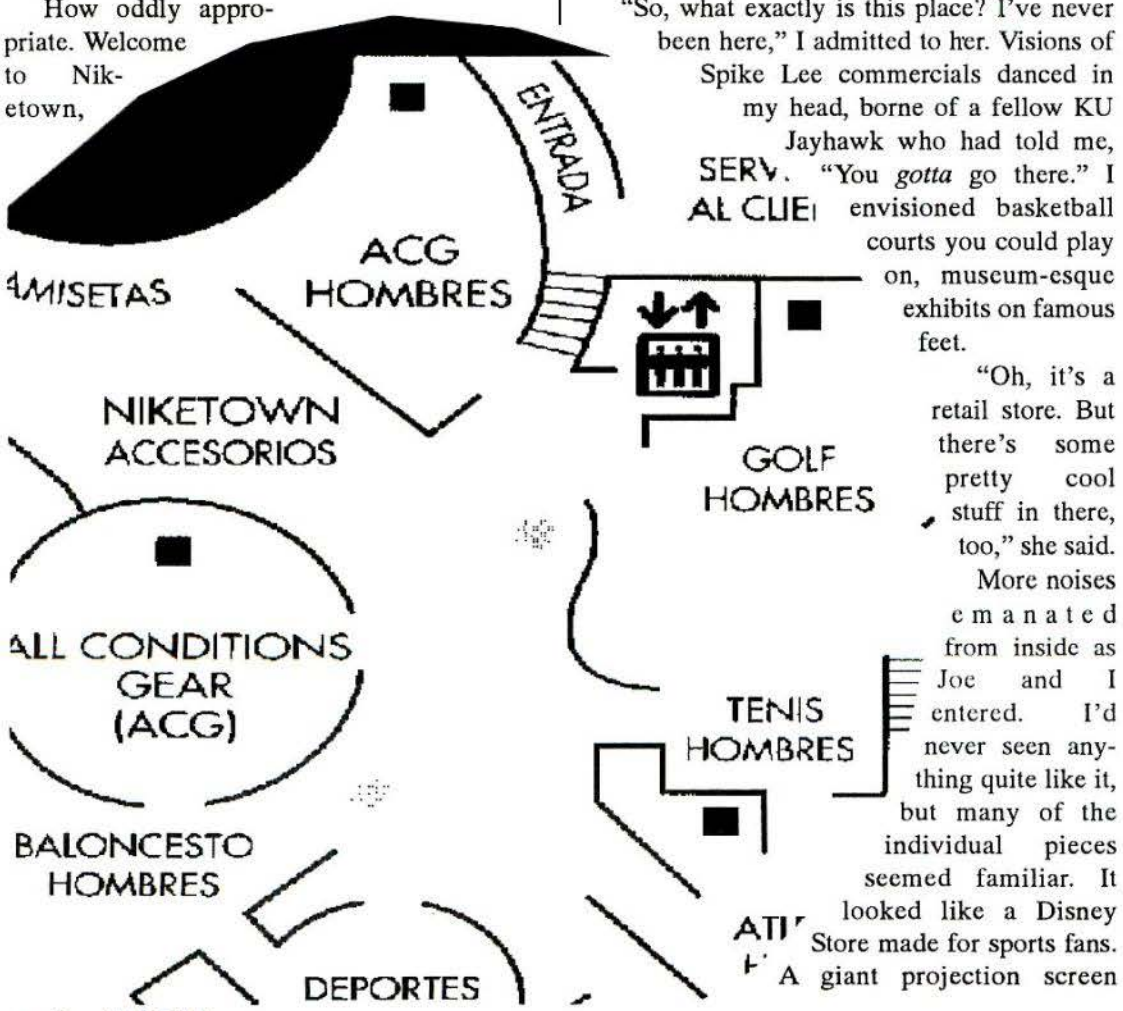
"Upstairs, across the sky bridge, on your right," directed a friendly, twentysomething staffer.

Seeing no stairs, we took the elevator and navigated our way to the bridge. I began to notice the Nike "swoosh" logo *everywhere*, and not just on the clothing. On a giant wall hanging, on water bottles, about every two feet on the handguard attached to the black walls...[1]

We located the restrooms (marked "M" and "W"), for which the door handles were not simple levers, but metal Nike swooshes! Inside, there was a black sink, black soap fixtures and another new sight – an entirely black toilet. As I sat down, my eyes rested on the stainless steel tile embedded in the floor. The swoosh was raised metal.

Hmm, I relaxed. Suddenly, a God-like voice inside my head repeated the Nike slogan: "Just Do It."

Meeting outside the restrooms, Joe and I looked around at the upstairs rooms, mainly dedicated to women's clothing. If the second-



floor demotion wasn't enough, women's volleyball, tennis and other sports command only a small area, compared to the men's mezzanine. For those who don't play soccer, there was not a lot to be interested in. Nike offers a poster of an intense Gabrielle Reece, oiled up in a black bikini, with the words "Looks Can Kill" above her. I don't recall any of those posters hanging upstairs in the ladies' section, though.

We ignored the entire room featuring women's shoes and went back downstairs, where the video and audio barrage continued unabated. In the men's basketball room, a floor-to-ceiling speaker was emitting dribble thuds, foul whistles and sole squeaks.

In the men's general athletic room, I finally worked up the nerve to ask one of the fleeced employees the deep, investigative question burning in my mind. Abusive, third-world labor practices? No. "Where's the new 'I Can' stuff?"

"Oh, it's not out yet."

(Imitate record scratch sound here.)

But I'd been reading about it in the paper! After a solid decade of spoon-feeding the country "Just Do It," the athletic giant needed a new boost, something to take people's minds off the *Doonesbury* cartoons. "Just Do It," the inspiration for a man saving a child from a burning house, in turn inspired Bob Dole's "Just Don't Do It" anti-drug campaign. The new "I Can" slogan left open the query, "Can *what?*" I guess each consumer is supposed to answer that themselves.[3]

Personally, I was let down. I at least wanted to see the slogan printed on stuff and be one of the first suckers to own some small trinket. No such luck.

After that enlightenment, I started looking at other things in the room. Spotting a $90 tag on a pair of bicycle pants, I realized I would be "just looking" for the remainder of our visit. While "just looking" at the other clothes, another fleece-clad mid-manager came into the room, and was asked by a worker I had asked, "So why *did* we change the slogan?"

"I dunno," the manager said, obviously in a hurry to get to another room.

I meandered. Joe said the place reminded him of something out of a totalitarian regime. He half expected a giant backdrop of Stalin's head to unravel from the ceiling.

Adding to the Orwellian ambiance were the clear plastic tubes with a conveyor gadget inside several of the rooms. One of the members of the proletariat – er, *employees* – explained that this was a merchandise shuttle, a sort of giant drive-thru bank vacuum or high-tech dumb waiter that would "swoosh" shoes or other consumer goods from the first floor to the second, and vice versa. In a Mecca of athleticism, inhabited by young, beautiful salesmodels, one need not even walk upstairs for charts on how to display the goods.

By this point, I was growing tired, not to mention disappointed. Where were the "History of Track Spikes" displays? All we got was a just-look-at-what-cool-shoes-we're-making-for-Michael-Johnston case. The sole[4] cool worker delegated to the upstairs, customerless wasteland known as "boys" *had* given me hope, though: "Yeah, that 'I Can' stuff'll be comin' in this spring! They're gonna have a whole marketing project and start bustin' out all the commercials soon! So look for it soon!"

But I headed to the exit weary and bagless, with the minions of hip-hopsters passing me like spawning salmon. Joe and I had seen a welcomer/bouncer "escort" a homeless person in a wheelchair from the showroom floor before, and we were ready to head in the same direction.

As we departed, the commercials had made a complete loop, and there was Namath at the breakfast table again, telling his wife how fast he'd be able to run away in his new Nike shoes. I looked up at the spotlighted, gray mannequin of Jordan flying toward a floating goal. I felt very tired, and thought of the ancient Greeks and their sculpted *Winged Victory*. I tried to imagine what *these* great minds would think of Niketown.

And honestly, "I Can't."

H

JUST DENY IT

Although I must admit I own two pairs of Nikes, I don't harbor any ethical guilt about labor accusations. I bought both pair from thrift stores, where the only people being exploited are the nose-ringed, grown-up punkers.

But here's what the Niketown folks have to say about the controversy:

"So how is business in a store like this?" Joe asked.

"Oh, excellent. It's just excellent," said the salesboy. "This mixing of multimedia and Nike products is the wave of the future."

"Have there been any problems with the recent Nike criticism?" Joe asked.

"Recent criticism?"

"Yeah, you know," explained Joe, "about the labor concerns, the Michael Moore film – that stuff."

"Well, okay, there were a couple of negative articles in *The Oregonian*, and there were a couple of small groups of protesters who came in here, but it really hasn't affected business at all," the salesboy fessed up. "What movie?"

He then directed us to a brochure detailing how Nike really *was* a good company, how they really *were* good for the developing countries, how they really *had* provided "500,000 jobs worldwide." Of course, the pamphlet said nothing of the wage the workers were paid or what exactly a job in the NikePlant! entailed (i.e. sewing, gluing, dyeing).

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[1]Later, Joe would remark to one of the salespeople, "I see this swoosh everywhere."

"Yeah," the vested one said, smiling.

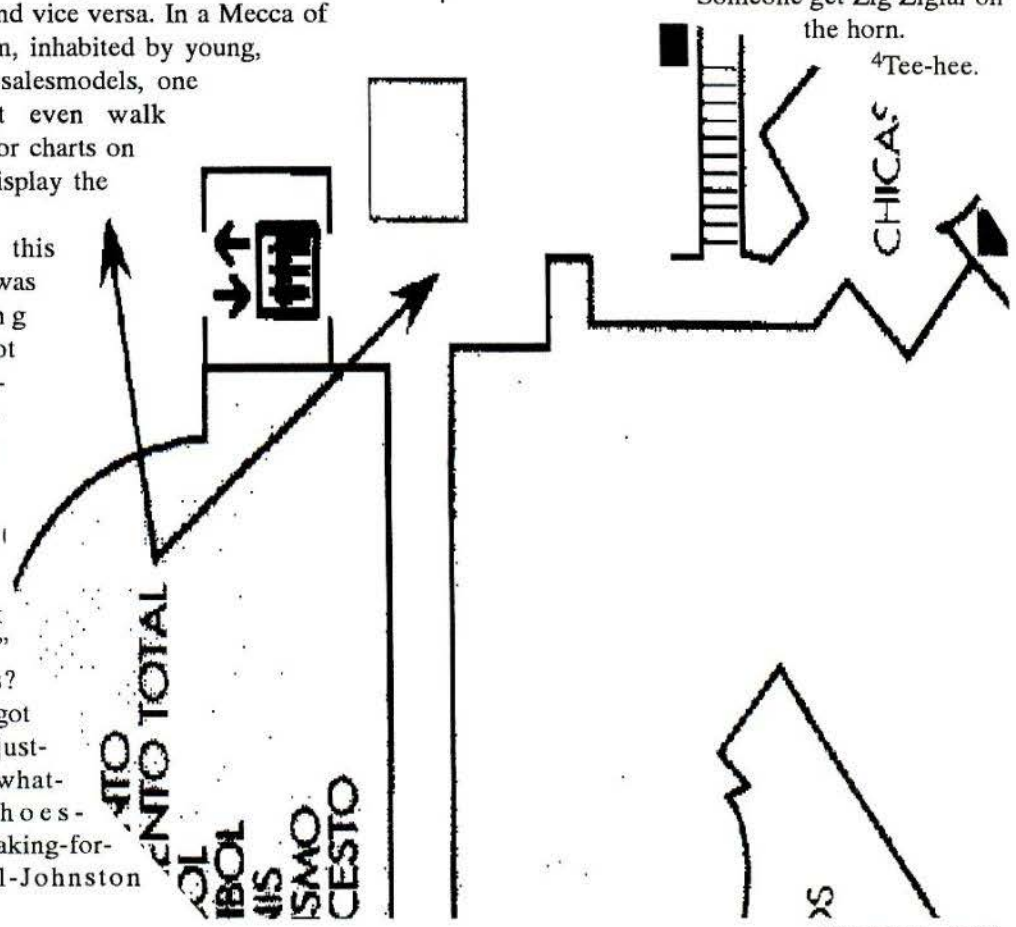
"Well, what is it?" Joe asked.

"Pegasus' wing.[2] See?" he said, pointing to a poster of the Louvre's *Winged Victory*.

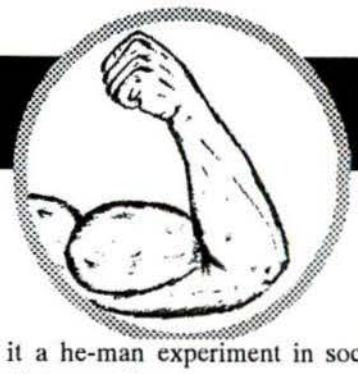
[2]I'm not an art expert, folks, but a headless chick with wings is *not* a horse.

[3]Championship Sportswear has announced they are suing Nike, claiming ownership of the "I Can" slogan due to previous use in Canada. Someone get Zig Ziglar on the horn.

[4]Tee-hee.



A HE-MAN ADVENTURE



The Eyes Have It!

As my pal Joe Rogers says, "Smarts is in!"

Apparently, he's right, because the local paper said so. A front-page article in that bastion of fine journalism known as *The Daily Oklahoman* extolled the virtues of wearing non-prescription eyeglasses solely for cosmetic reasons. The trend is sweeping the high schools in a fury not seen since the popularity of date rape; an Edmond student named Chad was quoted as saying he wears glasses so he can "look smarter. I hardly ever take them off."

Chad got the idea from a waiter friend who, after wearing glasses on the job to look smarter, ended up at night's end with a polyester smock full of more tips.

The bandwagon-jumping Chad remarked, "Now, people tell me how much better I look."

Chad's schoolmate Kate also dons the specs "to look smarter" and because they "are more in style than contacts these days."

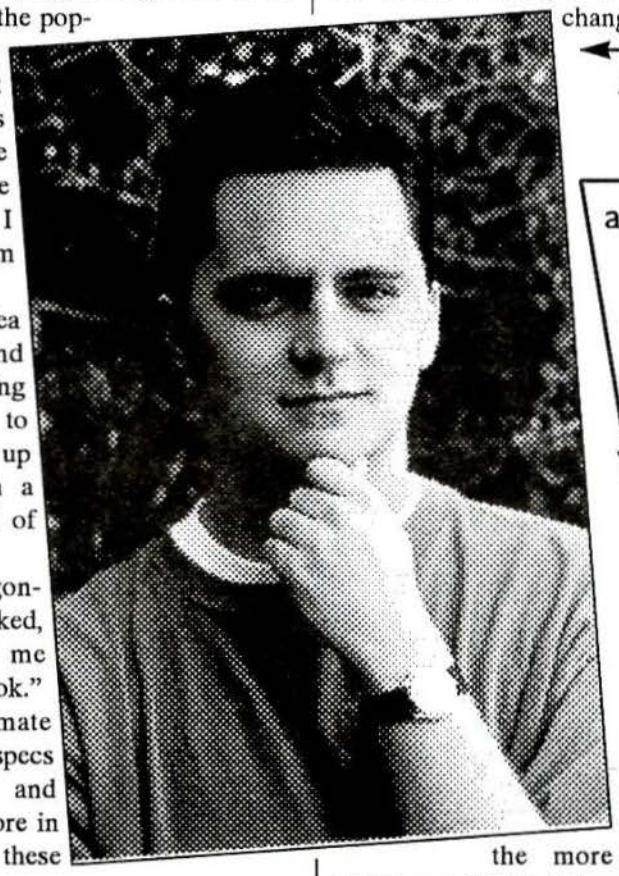
Ah, yes. Let us not lose track of the fact that in educational surroundings, image is everything.

A few picas down, glasses experts sang the praises of vision-perfect youths wearing specs they don't need by throwing out phrases like "status symbol" and "command more authority."

Status? Authority? Back when I was in junior high, I wore glasses and got reamed day in and day out for it. Dammit, I was *driven* to contacts!

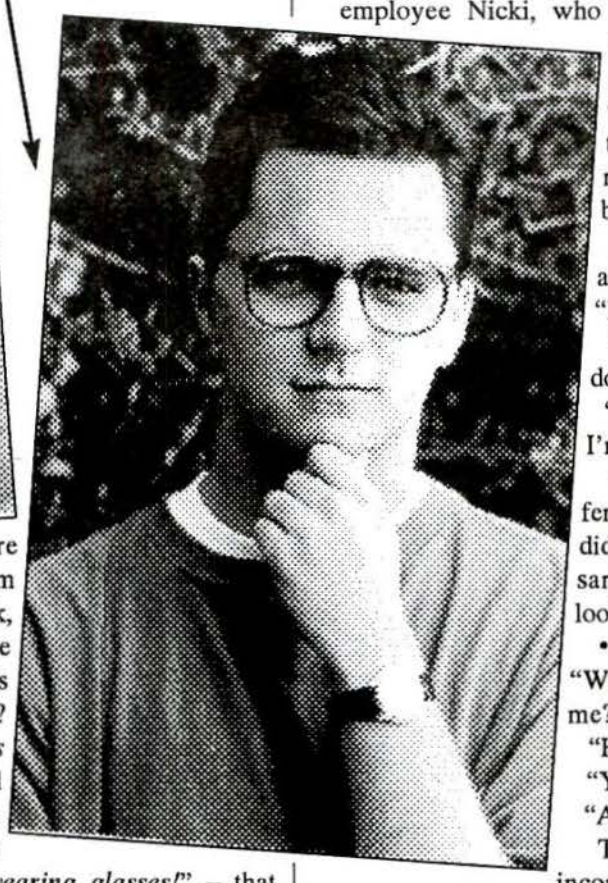
But the *Oklahoman* article (as all their articles do) forced me to rethink my opposition to glasses. Since it is important for everyone to like me, I decided to do what everyone else says I should do, even if it goes against my better judgment, because everybody's doing it and everyone knows popularity is the only thing that matters, right?

Borrowing some very-strong-prescription glasses from a friend, I decided to wear them around for a while, to see how my life would change for the better and the more intelligent. Not that I'm dumb now, but to think, "Who am I and where do I want to go on this super-highway of life? And just what color *is* my parachute?" and then being able to answer, "Fuck it, it doesn't matter; *I'm wearing glasses!*" – that seemed like the life to lead, the example to follow.



At left, Rod in the raw ...

and bespectacled (below).



To wear glasses is to be smarter, automatically accepted and well-liked. To be a hero, a god, a leader, a doer, a seer! To go anywhere and be anything to be! *And all because my God-given eyesight sucks!*

Call it a he-man experiment in sociology. Here is what went down:

• As I sat in the lobby of my place of business, administrative assistant Kathy joined me to chat. I slipped the specs on and was transformed instantly, warped into stud territory.

"Hey," Kathy said, "you should have your picture taken with *those* on!"

Wow! I thought. *Not only do glasses magnify your sight, but your sexuality as well!*

• I listened somewhat intently to an authority figure babbling on and on about something I don't remember. He talked about "climbing to the top" and "succeeding," and when he said this, *he looked right at me.*

• "Do I look smarter?" I asked fellow employee Nicki, who answered, "I really don't think most people look smarter with glasses. I don't think I do. I think my roommate does, but—"

"Yeah, but what about *me?*" I said. "Do *I* look smarter?"

"Well," Nicki said, "I don't ... no."

"Okay, then go away. I'm bored of you now."

• I put them on for a female friend. When I did, she replied (albeit sarcastically), "You look smart!"

• I asked another guy, "What do they do for me?"

"Honestly?" he said.

"Yeah."

"Absolutely nothing."

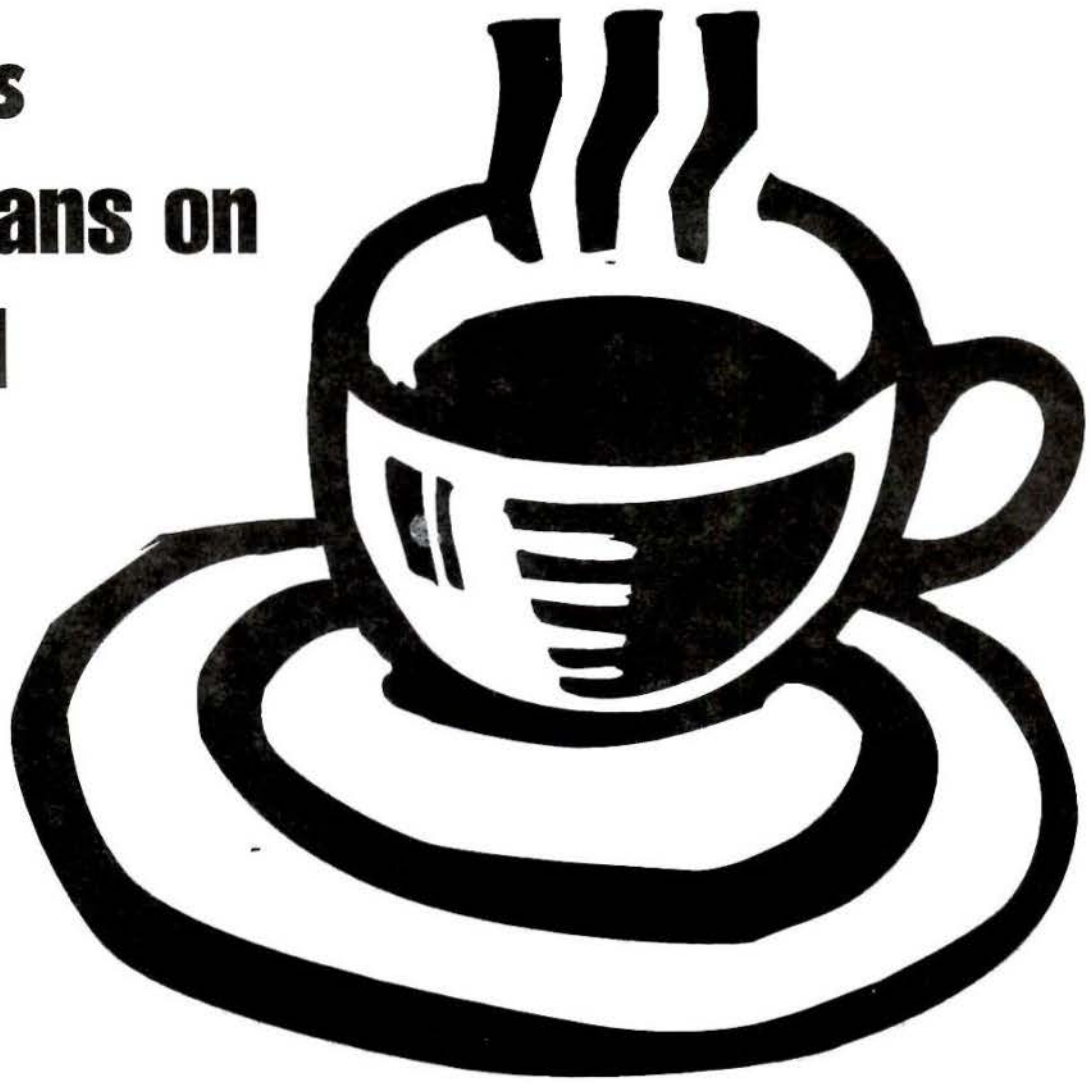
The results are fairly inconclusive. Check out the accompanying photographs and decide for yourself. Do I look any more Mensa than usual?

But since I'm such an utter slave to fashion and a whore when it comes to conformity, *I'm* not giving up. Next, I think I'll try the "backwards cap" look. Then maybe all the chicks will dig me. H

What Used to Be Geeky Now Gets Me Babes!

Crockajoe

Joe Rogers Spills the Beans on That Damned Annoying 'Coffee Culture'



Having lived in the Pacific Northwest for about two-and-a-half years – a stretch of time interrupted only by an unfortunate year-long sojourn in that Terrestrial Kingdom known as Utah – I'd have to say that, if it weren't for the proliferation of junkies, toxic salmonless rivers and old-fashioned smugness, the most noticeable thing about this area might be the quasi-culture surrounding coffee.

Perhaps this decade-defining phenomenon of the '90s is continentally ubiquitous. I surely wouldn't doubt that NYC, Boston, Toronto, Chicago or any of the other major urban centers of North America are likewise littered with these houses of addiction. All the same, I'd doubt that any of our fine purveyors of pollution would surpass the bent of the wet northwest toward these javajoints.

When I was living in Vancouver, BC (ah, Vancouver! All you've heard and more! O Jewel of the Pacific!), I quickly became aware of coffee shops appearing as frequently as McDonald's factories did back in Oklahoma City (ah, OKC! Home of the '89ers! Headquarters of **HITCH**! Mom and Dad!). Here, there, everywhere: that brown/black nectar available for your sampling. However, the precious elixir was more than simply that – those places weren't *really* designed to sell your basic, foundational, good-ol'-boy coffee. One needed to acquire a liking for almond lattés, mocha cappuccinos and so on, as I'm sure you understand.

Well. I've always had a penchant for that good-ol'-boy coffee (straight, no chaser). Truckstop coffee, I guess you could call it ... anyhow, a javajoint here is pretty much the same as a javajoint there, and the places here in Salem, Ore. aren't any different from the places

in Vancouver. And, naturally, when I saunter up to the counter and order "just a coffee," I can sense (my paranoia again?) an internal pair of server eyes rolling, and an internal server's voice muttering to itself, "He's not one of us."

Such is life. Yet, while I really don't give much of a hoot (as my father would have said) about making an impression on the hemp-necklaced coffeebabe (and definitely not the coffeejerk), these reactions toward my lack of sophistication are not all that surprising.

For starters, consider the core clientele of your neighborhood javajoint. I speak not of the lunch-breaking secretaries or the occasional hobo; I speak instead of the folks who are lounging at the place (often on the sidewalk, cig in hand), day in, day out. I speak of that group of junkies for whom coffee is not just a bitter, caffeinated beverage; a quick morning diuretic; a friendly encourager of gingivitis. For this special ensemble, this *congregation*, what was once a humble cuppajoe has now reached the level of the sacramental experience, with that corner javajoint naturally functioning as the church.

Among these pious individuals, one is likely to find many who could be classified, for all intents and purposes, as Yetis.[1] "A Yeti?" you ask. "And what might that be?" I refer all inquiring minds who want to know to the handsome *Fig. 1*.

Once, when I was taking a shuttle (actually a minivan) from SeaTac International to some cheap (but not cheap enough!) motel, the driver – assuming I'd never been to Seattle before – said that the one thing his fair city had which others did not was a burgeoning coffee fetish. He went on to extrapolate his thesis as to the reason behind this mania: as an addictive society for which overindulgence is the primary goal (the basic canon of advertising being the desire to convince the suckers that they need what they truly don't, and advertising being one of the prime movers of society), and the traditional vehicles for overindulgence lying in the realm of the tabooed and dangerous (tobacco, alcohol, sex, etc.), what *are* people left with to gorge upon without sensing any real guilt?

The only monkey coffee will put on the back of an uninformed "humanitarian" (apart from a rotten stomach[2]) is a headache if it's not guzzled. Despite its typical overabundance of automobiles, Seattle regards itself as a "health-conscious" city, and coffee is the one addiction many Seattleites (at least publicly) allow themselves.

This mentality is not only true for Seattle, is not only for even the blessed Pacific Northwest – but let us agree that this area certainly has produced that virile seed responsible for spawning this growing coffee fad.

One can now find a Texaco down the block which sells "espresso drinks," the proverbial coffeestands in the bookstores, library videocassettes detailing "the way" to

[1] Not to be confused with the hairy monster who sat upon sno-cones, much to Spider-Man's dismay, on PBS' *The Electric Company*.

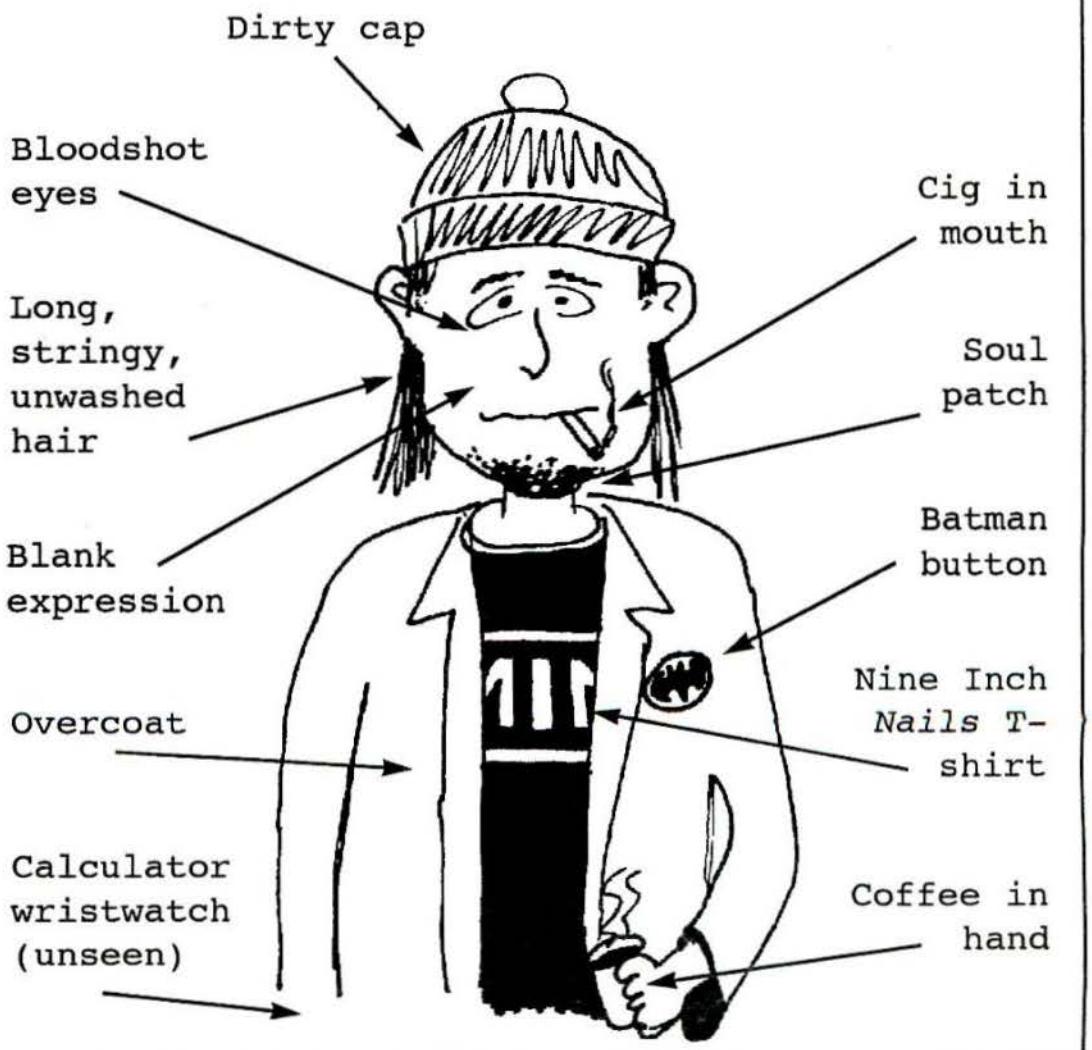
[2] See Balzac.

Yeti Q&A

Q: What are some common fashion accessories of a Yeti?
A: Black cosmetics, black trenchcoats and various body piercings are favored by Yetis.
Q: On the chance a Yeti is gainfully employed, where?
A: One can encounter Yetis working at Kinko's, the used bookstore or various thrift shops.
Q: What hobbies might a Yeti have?
A: Yetis enjoy participating in most any role-playing game.
Q: What movies will a Yeti like?
A: *Star Trek* Part Anything tops the viewing list for Yetis!
Q: Where is one likely to find a Yeti?
A: The Beanery coffee shop and Bob's Comix are two venues frequented by Yetis.
Q: What authors does a good Yeti read?
A: Stephen King and Anne Rice remain perennial faves!
Q: Approximately how much time generally elapses between Yetibaths?
A: 36 to 48 hours.
Q: What musical groups do Yetis enjoy listening to?
A: Why, Nine Inch Nails, Smashing Pumpkins and Pink Floyd, of course!
Q: What time does a Yeti roll out of bed?
A: To see a Yeti out and about before noon is unlikely.
Q: Why are they called Yetis?
A: Well, they're generally pretty hairy!

Fig. 1

Anatomy of a Yeti



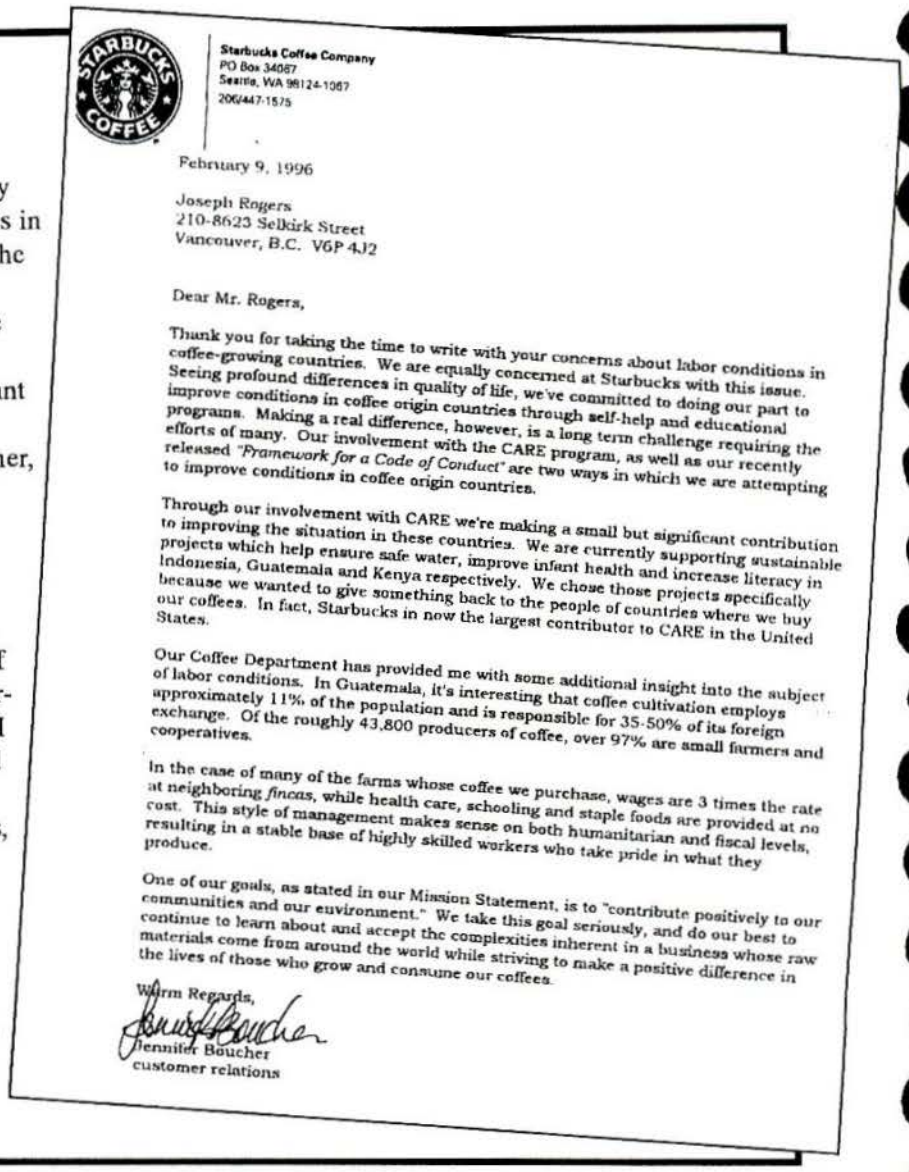
Starbucked

Another facet of the javajoint is the way in which its very operation depends upon the economic exploitation of peoples in the coffee-growing lands. In brief: The coffee purchased at the javajoint comes from locales around the globe – Africa, Indonesia, South America – which are by and large from the developing world. And while I don't really want to turn this critique of coffee shops into an economic diatribe, I only want to emphasize the need for Starbucks and Co. to exploit that indigenous grower if they intend providing *you*, dear customer, with that cup of coffee for a mere dollar.

Don't believe me? Take a look at how expensive "American" coffee is – namely, Hawaiian – to see its price when the laborers are paid an industrialized living wage.

I wrote Starbucks HQ in Seattle a while back, inquiring about their buying practices. I wanted to know the degree of indigenous exploitation that went into the cuppajoe I oft purchase. Their response appears below. As you can see, what I received was more of a "party line" non-response – a sound bite any speechwriter for Clinton or Dole could have scrawled – a smattering of feel-good adjectives and adverbs, but no raw, objective, statistical figures.

It kinda reminded me of the vegetarian wearing leather shoes (or, better still, a leather jacket) to the cooperative grain supply, or of the self-styled Christian who drives a BMW to church. All prefer to read the facts supportive of their position while ignoring those which are critical of it – with the humanity-loving coffeedrinker/veggie/churchgoer simplistic and naive at best, and utterly hypocritical at worst.



Starbucks Coffee Company
PO Box 34067
Seattle, WA 98124-1067
206/447-1575

February 9, 1996

Joseph Rogers
210-8623 Selkirk Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6P 4J2

Dear Mr. Rogers,

Thank you for taking the time to write with your concerns about labor conditions in coffee-growing countries. We are equally concerned at Starbucks with this issue. Seeing profound differences in quality of life, we've committed to doing our part to improve conditions in coffee origin countries through self-help and educational programs. Making a real difference, however, is a long term challenge requiring the efforts of many. Our involvement with the CARE program, as well as our recently released *"Framework for a Code of Conduct"* are two ways in which we are attempting to improve conditions in coffee origin countries.

Through our involvement with CARE we're making a small but significant contribution to improving the situation in these countries. We are currently supporting sustainable projects which help ensure safe water, improve infant health and increase literacy in Indonesia, Guatemala and Kenya respectively. We chose those projects specifically because we wanted to give something back to the people of countries where we buy our coffees. In fact, Starbucks in now the largest contributor to CARE in the United States.

Our Coffee Department has provided me with some additional insight into the subject of labor conditions. In Guatemala, it's interesting that coffee cultivation employs approximately 11% of the population and is responsible for 35-50% of its foreign exchange. Of the roughly 43,800 producers of coffee, over 97% are small farmers and cooperatives.

In the case of many of the farms whose coffee we purchase, wages are 3 times the rate at neighboring *fincas*, while health care, schooling and staple foods are provided at no cost. This style of management makes sense on both humanitarian and fiscal levels, resulting in a stable base of highly skilled workers who take pride in what they produce.

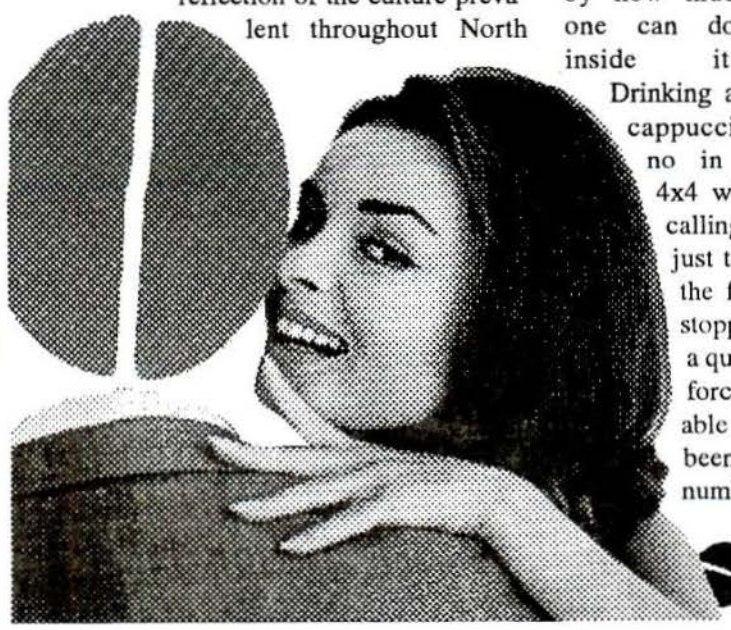
One of our goals, as stated in our Mission Statement, is to "contribute positively to our communities and our environment." We take this goal seriously, and do our best to continue to learn about and accept the complexities inherent in a business whose raw materials come from around the world while striving to make a positive difference in the lives of those who grow and consume our coffees.

Warm Regards,

Jennifer Boucher
customer relations

prepare "good" coffee.[3] Scenes at javajoints reminiscent of *Slacker*esque philosophies defining the meaning of life by the quality (or the quantity?) of their current egg nog latté jam my already-crowded mind, and if I'm in a hurry (and who isn't?), I am free to stop by my nearby drive-thru "Espressoville."

Our sheer frequency of javajoints is a reflection of the culture prevalent throughout North America – an impossible attempt to wedge everything desirable into the same moment. Whether these trends (efficiency, low prices, accessibility, relaxation, that caffeine fix, *et al*) are valuable is another harangue. It just doesn't seem, though, that making the most of the instant is defined by how much one can do inside it. Drinking a cappuccino in the 4x4 while hurrying to a meeting, calling a friend on the cell phone just to say "hi" while listening to the flavor-of-the-week radio and stopping *en route* to Wendy's for a quick burger "to go" do not join forces to make a hugely pleasurable moment. The meaning has been oversaturated and is made numb, resulting in (what grandmother would have called) a hodgepodge.



what are people left with to gorge upon without sensing any real guilt but coffee?

And yet, dear friend, when all is said (and said! and said! A problem of mine which some say I should work on in the new year: rambling) and done, I admit: Invariably, I still find myself, in spite of all these half-baked objections, in line at the javajoint with the other junkies waiting to be served my fix.

But I do not succumb entirely! It's "just a coffee" I'll order, in spite of the inevitable smirking of the coffeebabe. **H**

[3] To have been reviewed in this issue, but the tape broke.

MOVIE/VIDEO POSTERS FOR SALE

*** PRICING & PAYMENT ***
Following is an alphabetical list of movie and video posters we have for sale. All are in excellent to good condition unless otherwise noted. Movie posters are $10 each, video posters are $8 each, plus $6 shipping and handling for the first poster and $1 every poster thereafter.

The shipping's almost as much as some of the posters here, but hey, that's the USPS' problem. If you want it sent UPS (which will get it there a couple days quicker), then add $2 to your shipping. (Two people have complained about posters being sent via regular first-class mail, so if you want added security, UPS is the way to go.)

Mini posters cost $8 each, which includes shipping. I will accept only cash (at your own risk) and money orders. Because of the number of bounced checks, I will not take checks. Orders will be processed within one week of receiving them. All orders are shipped in brand-new, cardboard mailing tubes intended for the use of mailing posters.

In many cases, we have a very limited quantity of each title, so please reserve any poster by e-mailing me at RLott@aol.com.

*** BEFORE YOU ORDER...PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS ***
This is not what I do for a living. This amounts to a fire sale. In other words, ALL SALES ARE FINAL. NO REFUNDS OR EXCHANGES WILL BE GIVEN FOR ANY REASON! Once I ship a poster, it is no longer my responsibility. If a tube arrives damaged, the fault lies not with me, but with the courier service, whether that be UPS or the USPS. If this happens (and, in all honesty, out of the 100+ orders I have sent out, it has happened only twice), you need to register a complaint with that service. Do NOT send the posters back to me, asking for your money back. I wish that I didn't have to have this rule, but I do. If you do not agree with it, then please, do NOT order from me. I take great pride in sending out posters quickly and efficiently, at dirt-cheap prices, but I cannot take responsibility for the poster once they leave my hands.

*** WHAT THE SYMBOLS MEAN ***
Here's how to read the letters following each title:
v = This is a video poster. If there is no "v," the poster is from the title's theatrical release.
m = This is a mini-poster, somewhat smaller than the standard one-sheet.
f = This poster is folded, instead of rolled.
r = This letter, followed by a number, means nothing to you. It indicates to me where the posters are filed.

*** ABOUT QUESTIONS ***
I'm happy to answer any if you e-mail me at RLott@aol.com. However, before you do, please read the following actual, frequently (and infrequently) asked questions. Any questions I get like the ones below will be unanswered and referred back to here.

Q: Can you get me a poster of _____?
A: No. Please keep in mind I am *NOT* a retailer. If you don't see it here, I don't have it. Therefore, I cannot locate posters for you or do searches. Check with places like Rick's Movie Graphics or Cinema City for that. While I always come across new posters each month, I am just a normal guy with two closets full of posters and a wife who wants them gone.

Q: What are the sizes of the posters?
A: Theatrical movie posters measure 27" x 41". Video posters are almost always that size, although some are slightly — and I do mean slightly — smaller.

Q: I am interested in buying one of your posters, but I have a few concerns. First, I wonder if I can make a deal with you for possibly a lower price, because I think ten bucks and all that shipping and handling stuff is going a little far...
A: You idiot. How do you expect a package to get to your door if you don't pay for shipping? First of all, ten bucks for a poster in great — if not excellent — condition is a deep discount from the $20 you'd pay from retailers. The shipping and handling charges as detailed above cover exactly the expenses for the mailing tube and postage. If I were to not charge for it, I'd basically be giving a poster away for $4, and I'm not stupid.

Q: I was looking through the list of posters and I was wondering what the difference between movie posters and video posters were?
A: Movie poster = movie release. Video poster = video release. In most cases, the art for the two are the same.

Q: I would like a refund or an exchange. Can I send the posters back to you?
A: No. Please refer to the above section, "BEFORE YOU ORDER...PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS."

*** MY ADDRESS ***
Mail all orders to:
R. Lott
P.O. Box 23621
Oklahoma City, OK 73123-2621

*** AVAILABLE TITLES ***
9 1/2 Ninjas v r27
A.P.E.X. v r2
Above the Law r5
Accidental Tourist, The r8
Adventures of Beans Baxter, The (TV) m r15
Adventures of Ford Fairlane, The v r23
Adventures of Huck Finn, The (1993) v r3
Adventures of Pinocchio, The r19
Adventures of Robin Hood, The v f
After Hours r5
Age Old Friends v r4
Air Up There, The v 2 r2
Akira Kurosawa's Dreams (vertical banner) v r23
Albino Alligator
Alien from L.A. v r8
All of Me v r17
Almost an Angel v r22
Amazing Stories: Book One v f r28
Amazing Stories: Book Two v f
Amazing Stories: Book Two v r2
Amazon Women on the Moon r9
Ambition v r2
American Kickboxer 2 v r26
American Ninja 4: The Annihilation v r10
Amityville 4: The Evil Escapes v r28
Amityville: A New Generation v f
Amityville: A New Generation v r3
Amos & Andrew v r2
Angel City / Firehouse / Get Christie Love! v m r22
Angel Town v r4
Animated Adventures of Dick Tracy, The v r4
Anna v r9
Another 48 HRS. v r6
Another Chance f v r4
Another Pair of Aces v r22
Arachnophobia v r29
Aria r9
Avalon v r29
Awakenings v r2
Baby Boom v r5
Back in the USSR v r24
Back to the Beach v r17
Back to the Future Part II m r15
Back to the Future Part III v r28
Bare Essentials v r26
Barton Fink v r2
Bat 21 r9
Batman (Kim Basinger only) r8
Baywatch (soundtrack, square) r2
Beautiful Girls r1 2
Believers, The v r17
Benny & Joon v r24
Best of Chevy Chase, The v r17
Best of Dan Aykroyd, The v r17
Best of the Best 2 v r2
Betsy's Wedding v r25
Bette Davis Signature Collection v f r23
Big Bully v 2 r6
Big Picture, The v r4
Big r5
Big Slice, The v r11
Black Belt (auto) v r13
Black Rainbow v r10
Blank Check v r2
Blaze v r4
Blind Fury v r28
Blind Vengeance v f
Blood and Sand (Sharon Stone) v r26
Blood of Heroes, The v r4
Blood Warriors v r3
Bloodfist II v r22
Bloodfist IV: Die Trying (auto) v r13
Bloodfist V: Human Target (auto) v r13
Boiling Point v r2
Bonfire of the Vanities, The v r29
Book of Love v r10
Boost, The v f r20
Born Yesterday v r3
Bounty Tracker v f
Brady Bunch Movie, The r2 4
Breaking In v r6
Broadcast News r17
Bruce Lee: Curse of the Dragon v m r22
Buena Vista 10/93: Born Yesterday/A Far Off Place v r2
Buena Vista Winter '93: Life with Mikey/Huck Finn/Guilty as Sin/Super Mario Bros. v r3
Bullseye! v r2
Buried Alive v f r28
Cabin Boy v r2
Cadence v f
Cadence v r11
Cadillac Man v r25
Can't Buy Me Love v r5
Cape Fear m f 2
Cartoon All-Stars to the Rescue v r28
CB4 v r2
Chattahoochie v r16
Cheatin' Hearts v r26
Cheyenne Warrior v r2
China Lake Murders, The v r27
China White v r10
Chinatown v r26
Chungking Express r1 3
Circuitry Man v r22
Class of 1999 II: The Substitute v r14
Class of Nuke 'Em High Part 2: Subhumanoid Meltdown v r10
Clean and Sober r8
Comfort of Strangers, The v r25
Commitments, The v r2
Confessions of a Hitman v r2
Consenting Adults v r2
Cool Runnings v r2
Cool World r1
Corporate Affairs v f r23
Courage Mountain v r4
Courage Under Fire r19
Cover-Up v r2
Crash and Burn v r16
Crash and Burn v r4
Crazy People v r6
Criminal Justice v r25
Crooked Hearts v f
Curiosity Kills v f r26
Cutthroat Island v f r21
Cyborg Cop v r14
D.O.A. (1988) m r15
Daddy's Dyin'...Who's Got the Will? f v r4
Dances with Wolves v r2
Dangerous Game (1991) v r16
Dangerous Woman, A v r2
Dark Wind, The v r3
Darkman v f r24
Day of Atonement v r26
Days of Thunder v r22
Dead Alive v r26
Dead Heat v r8
Dead Man r1
Dead, The (horizontal) v r8
Deadfall v r14
Dean Koontz's Whispers v r22
Death Spa f v r4
Death Warrant (horizontal banner) v f r23
Death Warrant v f r23
Death Warrant v r28
Death Wish V: The Face of Death (horizontal mini banner) v r22
Death Wish V: The Face of Death v r2
Deceptions f v r4
Deepstar Six r7
Defending Your Life v r23
Delirious v r12
Delta Force 2 v r23
Demon Wind v r4
Denial v f
Desperate Hours v r22
Devil's Daughter, The v f
Devil's Daughter, The v r10
Diabolique r6
Dick Tracy (horizontal banner) v r23
Dick Tracy v r23
Diplomatic Immunity v f r26
Divine Garbo, The v r4
Do the Right Thing (horizontal banner) v r25
Do the Right Thing v r20
Dollman v r10
Donnie Brasco
Down the Drain v r4
Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story v r3
Dreamscape v r17
Driving Miss Daisy v r4
Dry White Season, A v r4
E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial m v r9
Eat the Rich v r7
Ed v r6
Eddie Murphy Raw v r17
El Diablo v r18
Elvis Costello: Spike r29
Emma r19
Enemies, a Love Story v r16
Eternity f v r4
Everybody Says I Love You
Everybody Wins v r4
Exorcist III, The v r23
Extreme Justice v r3
Fair Game (1991) v r29
False Identity v r4
Family Matter, A v r2
Fantasist, The v r8
Far Out Man v r16
Fatal Attraction (Glenn Close B&W mini) v r21
Fatal Attraction v r21
Felix the Cat: The Movie v r10
Femme Fatale v f r28
Field of Dreams v r6
Firebirds v r18
Firehouse / Angel City / Get Christie Love! v m r22
First Kid
Fletch Lives m f
Flight of the Intruder v r11
Flintstones Video Collection v r2
Flirting with Disaster r1 3

Forever Young r22
Four Rooms r1 3
Fourth Story v r29
Fourth War, The v r16
Frame Up v r26
Frankenhooker f v r4
Frankenweenie v r25
Frankie and Johnny (1991) v r2
Freefall v r2
From Dusk Till Dawn m r1
From Dusk Till Dawn r1
Full Fathom Five f v r4
Full Metal Jacket v r9
Futurekick v r10
Gamble, The v r6
Gas Food Lodging v r2
Get Christie Love! / Firehouse / Angel City v m r22
Getting Away with Murder v r6
Ghost Dad (horizontal banner) v r25
Ghosts Can't Do It v r18
GoodFellas (Oscar mention) v r26
GoodFellas m v r5
GoodFellas v r25
Great Escape II, The: The Untold Story v r22
Green Card (door) v r5
Green Card v r6
Gremlins 2: The New Batch v r23
Grifters, The v r2
Guardian, The v r4
Guilty by Suspicion v r10
Gung Ho v r17
Guns v r28
Hackers m3 r1
Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers r2
Handmaid's Tale, The v r16
Hard Way, The f v r10
Hardware v r27
Harvest, The v r2
Havana v f r29
Have an MGM/UA Christmas v f
He Said, She Said v r11
Heads v r2
Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse v r24
Help Save Planet Earth v r16
Henry & June v f r28
Henry V v f r25
Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer f v r4
Hider in the House v r11
Hiding Out m r15
Home Alone v r2
Homer & Eddie v r4
Homeward Bound II: Lost in San Francisco v r6
Honeymoon Academy v r18
Hook v r2
Hot Pursuit v r17
House of Games v r5
House Party v r16
Hudson Hawk v r2
Hunt for Red October, The r6
Hunt for Red October, The v r18
Husbands and Wives v r2
I Love You to Death v r28
I'm Dangerous Tonight v f
I, Claudius v r2
I.Q. r2
If Looks Could Kill v r2
Impulse v r4
In the Name of the Father v r2
In the Spirit v r16
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade r7
Innerspace v r5
Inside Out / Requiem for Dominic (two-sided) v r10
Into the West v r2
Ishtar (horizontal) v r7
Jack the Bear v r3
Jane Fonda's Lean Routine Workout v m f r27
Jane Fonda's Lean Routine Workout v r18
Janet Jackson: The Rhythm Nation Compilation v r28
JFK v r24
Jimmy Hollywood r26
Joe Versus the Volcano v r28
Johnny Handsome v r4
Josephine Baker Story, The v r2
Judgment Night m r23
Julia and Julia v r9
Julia Has Two Lovers v r2
Jungle Book, The (1967) v r11
Junior m r3
Jurassic Park (advance square) f
Just Another Girl on the I.R.T. v r3
Kazaam
Keeper of the City v r24
Killer Tomatoes Strike Back v 2 r12
Killer Tomatoes Strike Back v r2
King of New York v r24
King of the Kickboxers v r10
King Ralph (horizontal banner) v f
King Ralph v f
Kingpin m r19 9
Kingpin r19 2
Kiss Before Dying, A v r12
Kiss Before Dying, A v r27
Knights v r2
Kuffs v r24
Last Call v r25
Last Exit to Brooklyn v r6
Last of the Finest, The v r16
Last Outlaw, The v r2
Lawless Land, The v r8
Leap of Faith v r22
Legal Tender v r2
Lemon Sisters, The v r25
Lena's Holiday v r2
Life with Mikey v r3
Lionheart v f
Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy Jones v r10
Long Kiss Goodnight, The r*3
Longtime Companion v r28
Look Who's Talking Too v r2
Lost in Yonkers v r3
Love Field v r2
Love Field v r22
Lower Level v f
Lower Level v r10
Made in America v r3
Madhouse v r16
Maid, The v r24
Man from U.N.C.L.E., The v f
Man Who Saw Tomorrow, The v m r17
Man's Best Friend v r2
Marked for Death (giant – bigger than a door) v
Married to It v f
Married to It v r3
Married with Children (TV) m r15
Marrying Man, The v r10
Marrying Man, The v r12
Martial Outlaw v r3
Mary Shelley's Frankenstein r1 3
Meeting Venus v r24
Men of Respect v r11
MGM Academy Award Winning Classics (door) v r23
Midnight Run v r20
Milk Money 4 r3
Mo' Better Blues (horizontal banner) v r25
Mo' Better Blues v r25
Mob Story f v r4
Money Train r1 2
Moon 44 v r22
Mortal Passions f v r4
Moving Violations v m r17
Mr. and Mrs. Bridge v r11
Mr. Bill's Real Life Adventures v r17
Mr. Holland's Opus v r6
Mr. North v r8
Mr. President (TV) m r15
Muppet Christmas Carol, The v r3
Music Box v r4
My Father the Hero v r2
My Left Foot v r4
My Stepmother Is an Alien r8
Nadine v r17
Naked Gun 33 1/3: The Final Insult r27 2
National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation v r22
National Lampoon's Last Resort v r14
Neil Simon's Broadway Bound v f
Neverending Story, The II: The Next Chapter r26
New Year's Day (Jaglom) v r18
New York Stories r26
Nickel and Dime v r2
Night and the City (1992) v r2
Night Angel v r16
Night Before, The v r8
Night Shift v m r15
Night We Never Met, The v r3
Nightwatch
Not Without My Daughter v r10
Nude Bomb, The v f
Nuns on the Run v r4
Omega Cop v r4
Once Around v f
One Good Cop v r11
One Man's War v r2
One More Shot (autographed)
Opportunity Knocks v r4
Orphans v r9
Oscar (door poster of Stallone) v r25
Other People's Money v r12
Overexposed f v r4
Pacific Heights v f r28
Pacific Heights v r24
Paint It Black v f r20
Palermo Connection, The v r2
Paramount: 75th Anniversary r8
Parenthood (horizontal) f v r6
Payback v r26
Payoff v r10
Peggy Sue Got Married v r17
People vs. Larry Flynt, The
Permanent Record v r9
Phantom, The a r1
Philadelphia Experiment 2, The v r14
Philadelphia Experiment, The v r17
Piano, The v r2
Pit and the Pendulum, The (1991) v r29
Plain Clothes v r9
Prancer v r28
Predator 2 v r11
Presumed Innocent v r29
Pretty Woman (door size) v r18
Priceless Beauty f v r4
Prince and the Pauper, The (Disney) v r11
Principal, The v r21
Private Parts
Problem Child (horizontal banner) v f r27
Problem Child v r27
Prom Night III: The Last Kiss v r4
Prophecy, The r1
Q&A v r4
Quick Change v r29
R.E.M.: Green r4
Rainbow Drive v r28
Raw Justice v r2
Red Surf v r4
Repossessed v r22
Requiem for Dominic / Inside Out (two-sided) v r10
Return of the Killer Tomatoes v r8
Reversal of Fortune v r2
Rich in Love v r24
Riders of the Storm v r9
Riding the Edge v r18
Rising Son v r28
Robin Hood (Patrick Bergin) v r27
Robocop / Robocop 2 (horizontal mini banner) v r22
Robocop 2 v r23
Rock, The m2 r1
Rock, The r1 2
Roger Corman's Frankenstein Unbound v r23
Rollercoaster Rabbit f m r4
Run / Shipwrecked (horizontal) v r2
Run v r2
Russia House, The (vertical mini) v f
Russia House, The v r2
Sarafina! v 2 r2
Scanners 2: The New Order v r12
Scenes from a Mall v r2
Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills r7
Scissors v r12
Scrooged m r17
Secret Honor m r15
Serpent and the Rainbow, The v f
Servants of Twilight v r10
Seven Years in Tibet
sex, lies, and videotape v r4
Sexual Outlaws v r2
Sgt. Kabukiman NYPD (autographed) f r21
She's Having a Baby r17
She-Devil v r4
Sheltering Sky, The v r11
Shine m
Shipwrecked / Run (horizontal) v r2
Shock 'Em Dead v r22
Shock to the System, A f v r4
Shock to the System, A v r4
Short Cuts v r2
Short Time v r23
Shrimp on the Barbie, The v r22
Silent Night, Deadly Night 4: Initiation v r28
Sinful Life, A v m r20
Sing r8
Skin Deep (horizontal banner) v r23
Slaughter of the Innocents v r2
Snakeeater II: The Drug Buster v r28
Sniper r2
Some Girls v r20
Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture v f r28
Something Wild v r9
Son of the Morning Star (horizontal banner) v f
Sorcerer f v r4
Spaced Invaders v r18
Spartacus: 30th Anniversary Edition f v r2
Speechless r2
Speed (horizontal) v r13
Speed Zone m r8
Splitting Heirs v r3
Spy Hard m2 r1
Spy Hard r1
Squeeze, The (1987) v r7
Stakeout v r5
Stanley & Iris f v r4
Stanley & Iris v r18
State of Grace v r23
Stella v r4
Stephen King's The Tommyknockers v r3
Straight Out of Brooklyn v r10
Subspecies v r11
Summer Rental v r17
Swashbuckler v f r26
Take, The v f r24
Tale of a Vampire v r26
Tales from the Darkside: The Movie v r4
Tapeheads r8
TeenVid v r2
Texas Guns v r28
That Summer of White Roses v r16
That Thing You Do! r*2
Theolonious Monk: Straight No Chaser f r4
Thin Blue Line, The r9
Things Change v r7
Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead r1 2
This Boy's Life 2 r2
Three Men and a Baby v m r15
Three Musketeers, The (1993) v r2
Three of Hearts v r3
Throw Momma from the Train ("This Is Momma" mini) r21
Throw Momma from the Train m r15
Throw Momma from the Train r5
Thunder in Paradise v r26
Tin Men v r17
To Dance with the White Dog v r2
Tom Jones v r2
Torrents of Spring v r4
Total Exposure v f
Tracey Ullman Show, The (TV) m r15
Trancers II: The Return of Jack Deth v r25
Tremors v r4
True Identity v r24
Tune in Tomorrow... (door) v r23
Twenty Bucks v r2
Twisted / The Wicked (two-sided) v r10
Twisted Obsession v r16
Two Jakes, The v r24
Two Jakes, The v r26
U-Turn
Under the Rainbow r18
Undercover Blues r22
Unforgettable v r6
Universal Monsters (rip) v r12
Universal Monsters v r11
Untamed Heart v r24
Untouchables, The v r17
V.I. Warshawski v r10
Vanna White: Get Slim and Stay Slim (door) v r5
Vital Signs f v r4
Waiting for the Light v r2
Warner Bros.' Reel Heroes '91: Gibson, Connery, Norris, Selleck v r2
Waxwork II: Lost in Time v r24
We're No Angels (1990) v r6
Welcome Home Roxy Carmichael (horizontal banner) v r23
Werewolf (TV) m r15
What about Bob? v r10
What about Bob? v r2
What's Eating Gilbert Grape v r2
When Harry Met Sally... r20
White Hunter, Black Heart r23
Why Me? v r28
Wicked, The / Twisted (two-sided) v r10
Wild Orchid v r4
Wish You Were Here v r17
Women & Men: Stories of Seduction v r22
Working Girl r6
Worth Winning v r6
Your Personal Workout v r16
Zentropa v r2
Zoot Suit v r2

ROCK

Ivy
Apartment Life
(Atlantic)

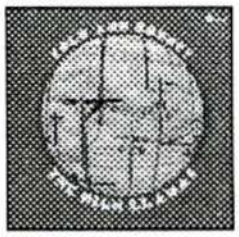
Dominique Durand has the voice of an angel with dirty deeds on her mind. Aided by the songwriting talents of Andy Schlesinger (of Fountains of Wayne), she propels the band Ivy to greater heights than one would expect. Sounding like the most infectious pop songs played on the coldest winter day, Ivy's repertoire – from the single "The Best Thing" to the space-heater seductiveness of "I've Got a Feeling" – simply floats on a draft of melodic, big-city bliss. Which is not to say this is wussy music by any means. Rather, even played at soft volumes, it rocks. I expect greater things to come.

Elvis Costello
Extreme Honey: The Very Best of the Warner Bros. Years
(Warner/Reprise)

Mr. MacManus says "sayonnara" to WB with a contract-fulfillment greatest-hits package that won't disappoint any Costello fan, even if they've heard it all before. Only one new song appears here, "The Bridges I Burned," a sly reworking of Prince's "Pop Life." While not showcasing Costello in his top form, it ain't bad. For flawless Costello, check out any of the tracks from '87's *Spike*, or "The Other Side of Summer" and "Kinder Murder." For a dash of eclecticism, his work with the Brodsky Quartet appears here, as well as his contribution ("My Dark Life") to the *X-Files* soundtrack. Newly signed to PolyGram, Costello promises that the best is yet to come. Now if he can only get around to recording that album with Burt...

Shaken and Stirred
The David Arnold James Bond Project
(Sire)

The *Tomorrow Never Dies* composer collaborates with an eccentric spectrum of artists to dissect the best of 007's screen themes. The end result is a sleek, technological-minded and brave – not to mention highly enjoyable – experiment. Partnering both with acts virtually unknown to these parts (David MacAlmont, Natscha Atlas) and big names (Chrissie Hynde, Aimee Mann), Arnold makes a fine complement to the respective other half's sound. Interestingly, the instrumental tracks from Leftfield ("Space March") and Propellerheads (a 10-minute "On Her Majesty's Secret Service") work best, but LTJ Bukem's "James Bond Theme" is drained of all that has made that song such a beloved classic. ABC's Martin Frye makes a fine Tom Jones sub for "Thunderball." A restrained Iggy Pop sings "We Have All the Time in the World," and does a wonderful job. As a Bond fan, I'm a sucker for any 007 disc. Unlike most, this one's good – an original, admirable piece of work. I'd like to see Arnold tackle a second.



The High Llamas
Cold and Bouncy
(V2)

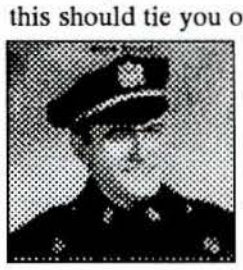
How do you follow up a masterpiece like last year's *Hawaii*? Just keep doing what you do best. In the case of head Llama Sean O'Hagan, that entails whipping up a moody mix of pop influences from Brian Wilson to Burt Bacharach, and adding a non-stop harmonic team of banjos, strings and the marimba that sneaks up on you and smacks you in the face with its collective cleverness. The results are winning, smartly building upon *Hawaii*'s blue-ribbon approach to easy listening, rather than trying to replicate it. "Homespin Rerun" is the track to beat, and one that best sums up the album's title: While moving along on its own damn giddy terms, its sonic trickery leaves one with the faint hint of a trade wind chill – not unlike the best work of O'Hagan's Stereolab pals. As with the Llamas' previous LP, the tracks without vocals tend to speak louder than the ones with. It is as if every A&M album from three decades ago had been whisked away in a coastal hurricane, and meshed together into product that would make Herb Alpert blush with undeniable envy.

Richard Davies
Telegraph
(Flydaddy)

Put simply, Richard Davies' *Telegraph* is something of a revelation. A blessed marriage of folk and modern rock, this album's songs unassumingly sneak up on you and strike you with their crystal-clear melodies and fragile brilliance. Songs like the opening "Cantina" and "Confederate Cheerio Call" whirl about before settling into some of the finer refrains to grace your ears in some time. Wonderful production on the numbers "Eye Camera" and "Papillion" lend them that quiet, wintery gloss that one found on the best songs from the Sire label in its early-'90s heyday. The closing "Days to Remember" bravely changes tempo midway through, and Davies and his guitar pull it off without fail. Though his voice is not velvety-smooth as his Cardinal counterpart Eric Matthews, his music is much sweeter. I'd be lying if I didn't deem this a pop masterpiece.

Ben Folds Five
Naked Baby Photos
(Caroline)

It's never too early to have a rarities album, as long as it's this good. The trio's material like "Underground" and "Song for the Dumped" are still fresh in their original forms, but seem just as juicy performed live here. The stage setting really showcases BF5's true, playful talents. Occasionally, the band veers into nonsensical parodies, like a rap song ("For Those of Y'All Who Wear Fanny Packs," which is amusing) or heavy metal ("Satan Is My Master," which isn't). While you're waiting another year for the band's next studio album, this should tie you over.



Mark Eitzel
Caught in a Trap and I Can't Back Out 'Cause I Love You Too Much, Baby
(Matador)

As the lengthy title would suggest, former American Music Club frontman Eitzel's fourth solo album is one that has a lot to say. You just might not notice at first, given the record's sparse, stripped-down sound and Eitzel's own soft-spoken delivery that suggests spontaneity. None of this, however, is bad. Rather, it is *Caught*'s own decision to be quiet that makes you listen and pay attention, for there's much on Mark's mind, from yesterday's garbage to tomorrow's empty idols. As the album nears its end, the sound starts to come more alive, perhaps to best effect on "Queen of No One." Though the cover's monobrowed cop may be wearing a smile, there is pain behind those eyes, waiting to get out. Few are able to express such feelings as well – and literate – as Eitzel.

Liquor Giants
Every Other Day at a Time
(Matador)

Bands with names that call attention to themselves usually carry names like that because their music won't do it for you. Liquor Giants is the exception to that unwritten rule. Liquor

has never been all that fun for me, but if it had a hand in the fun this record brings – and I strongly suspect it does – maybe I should reconsider. Like everything a summer-day storefront band should be, these Giants are loose, carefree and strong channelers of those good vibrations. Borrowing heavily from '60s "up" rock, the Giants' songs are lean, mean and bouncy, from the planitive "Kentucky Lounge" to the self-explanatory "Multicolored Hipshake." Titles like "Riverdale High" and "It Only Hurts When I Smile" give you a glimpse into the band's sense of humor, but they're never jokey. And I swear, the cut "Caroline" is a hit single just crying to be played.

SOUNDS

Curtis Mayfield

Superfly: Deluxe 25th Anniversary Edition

(Rhino)

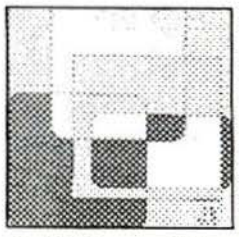
Few deluxe packages are ever worth the effort, but the treatment Rhino's given to this classic blaxploitation soundtrack truly earns the reverence. A helluva blast of socially conscious '70s soul, Mayfield's score broke ground and influences thousands. Written as though each song was an individual character's theme, cuts like "Pusherman" and "Freddie's Dead" have become undeniable classics. The instrumentals "Junkie Chase" and "Think" are even better, at turns frantic and introspective. The set's second disc rounds up demos, alternate mixes, lost tracks, radio spots and an interview with Mayfield. If you can ever stop playing the first disc, you might get around to it someday.

Trainspotting #2

Music from the Motion Picture #2

(Capitol)

Nowhere near as good as the first, but how could it be? Yet this follow-up soundtrack to Danny Boyle's now-classic junkie ode stands well on its own, even if the album delves more into remixes and songs inspired by the film instead of in the film. Not that such an approach is necessarily bad; after all, we'd be without Primal Scream and Joy Division if it were.



Scored 1-0

(JTI Records)

Behind one of the ugliest sleeve designs ever is a cool collection of acid jazz artists paying homage to film themes that influenced them. Released on James Taylor Quartet's own label, *Scored 1-0* begins with JTQ's own club hit "Theme from *Starsky & Hutch*", followed by various bands reworking songs from *Black Belt Jones*, *Get Carter*, *Sportsnight*, *Coogan's Bluff* and, for the requisite Bond theme, *Diamonds Are Forever*. The most amazing track, however, comes from Afroshock and its largely clarinet-driven, seven-minute version of Mike Oldfield's "Tubular Bells" from *The Exorcist*.

Boogie Nights #2

More Music from the Original Motion Picture

(Capitol)

Shelving initial plans to issue the *Boogie Nights* soundtrack as a two-CD set, Capitol instead broke them into two packages to get more of your money. Unlike the *Trainspotting #2*, this collection is 100 percent comprised of music that appears in the film. Topping the handful of '70s tunes are Apollo 100's neo-rock reworking of "Joy," "Mama Told Me Not to Come" by Three Dog Night and Hot Chocolate's "You Sexy Thing," which also features prominently in *The Full Monty*. Occupying the last disc's cheesy-must-skip-'80s-song is Rick Springfield with "Jessie's Girl." After viewing the movie for a third time, I still think they have enough songs to put out a third volume. If so, I'd like to see more of Michael Penn's score included.

An American Werewolf in Paris

Music from the Motion Picture

(Hollywood)

Unless you're one of those who considers suicide a hobby, there is precious little to like on this howler of a soundtrack – fitting, as the film sucks, too. Bands like Bush, Skinny Puppy and Caroline's Spine provide unpleasant shrieks passed off as music. Only Cake, with a cover of Barry White's "Never Gonna Give You Up," emerges unscathed.

The Jackal

Music from and Inspired By

(MCA)

Last spring's *The Saint* soundtrack helped me see that all electronica didn't suck. Continuing in that tradition, *The Jackal* soundtrack proves that it can be even be fun. Fatboy Slim opens the lengthy disc with a relentless, most enjoyable cover of The Who's "Going Out of My Head." Massive Attack provides a loose and trippy follow-up with "Superpredators," prior to a fitting Britpop turn toward Primal Scream's "Star." Black Grape's "Get Higher" is an amusing enough cut, interspersed with manipulated drugspeak courtesy of President Reagan. LTJ Bukem's theme puts a natural close on the album, which also includes the now-ubiquitous Moby tune. The Chemical Brothers, the Charlatans, Goldie and Prodigy also are present, but all are shown up by the song "Shineaway," a collaboration between BT and ex-Psychedelic Furs throatman Richard Butler, which manages to transform a trip-hop beat into an honest-to-God hauntingly beautiful melody. It shoulda been a single.

The Mad, Mad World of Soundtracks

(Motor)

Spanning the hip years of 1966 to 1972, *Mad* rounds up 20 film songs that *should* be classics, but aren't. The only one that comes close is Mancini's *The Party* theme. Other tracks come from movies as varied as *Deadlier than the Male*, *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, *Skidoo*, *Bullitt*, *The Ambushers* and *Stiletto*. Ann-Margret, Chaquito, Nancy Sinatra, The Walker Brothers, Lalo Schifrin and Hugo Montenegro are among the artists in top form. As a German import, this ain't cheap, but is worth every pretty penny.

Jackie Brown

Music from the Miramax Motion Picture

(Maverick)

Regardless of what you thought of the film, one can always expect a good soundtrack from Quentin Tarantino. This one largely pays homage to '70s soul, with Bobby Womack's gritty "Across 110th Street" and Pam Grier's own funky "Long Time Woman." Topping the disc is the Delfonics' majestic heartbreaker "Didn't I Blow Your Mind This Time," which I can't listen to less than three times in a row. Representing more modern sounds are The Vampire Sound Inc.'s wicked and warped "The Lions and the Cucumber" and Elliot Easton's Tiki Gods' "Monte Carlo Nights," which originally appeared on the Del-Fi compilation *Pulp Surfin*. Gee, I wonder where QT ever came across it?

Classic TV Game Show Themes

(Varése Vintage)

Twenty game show tunes – from *Wheel of Fortune* to *Jeopardy* – may sound like torture, but those in the know (i.e. spent many a summer day watching these programs) will find this collection to be a fun, pleasing trip into nostalgia. Surprisingly, many of these songs – especially those from *What's My Line* and *I've Got a Secret* – swing with a similar carefree attitude as the production music from Scamp's

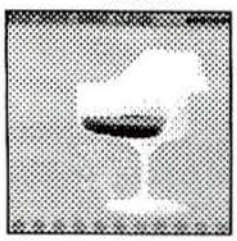
Music for TV Dinners series. In fact, there is much here to satisfy any lounge fan, whether one with a taste for Vegas (*The Wizard of Odds*) or Herb Alpert soundalikes (*The Dating Game*). Taken away from their usual context of the tube, the themes from *The Price Is Right* and *The Joker's Wild* sound positively liberated. Revel to the '80s campiness of *Tic Tac Dough*'s synthesized handclaps (dragon not included). Merv Griffin, Alan Thicke and Chuck Barris are among the songwriters whose finest throwaway tunes have been captured here. These are full-length versions, too; no mere 30-second clips here. Now I want the Game Show Network on my cable lineup and my life will be complete.

Acid Jazz Movie & TV Themes

(Hollywood/Acid Jazz)

Similar to *Scored 1-0* but more polished, this collection sports theme covers from mostly British acts, including James Taylor Quartet, Snowboy and Corduroy. (All three of JTQ's contributions can be found on its *Mission Impossible* and *Creation* albums.) These versions of themes from sources as varied as *The Love Boat*, *Rollerball*, *The Graduate* and *Dirty Harry* are sleek and professional, without a hint of off-putting kitsch.

Swank



Eighteenth Street Lounge

The Soundtrack: Volume One

(ESL Music)

Fans of "new lounge" have lots to love in the first of a planned series of "soundtracks" of regular acts appearing at Washington, D.C.'s Eighteenth Street Lounge club. From Astrud Gilberto-style vocals to the wordless future vibes of the next millennium, this disc captures the very essence of the cool scene. Marden Hill takes a turn into blaxploitation territory with the groovy, windows-down "Harlem River Drive," while Dig Alliance! samples *Twin Peaks* for a moody "Rotorvibe." At disc's halfpoint, Red's "Squealer" begins as the noirish noir theme imaginable, slowly settling in (Morricone-style) to one of the year's most cinematic and moving refrains. (ESL Music, 1210 18th St. N.W., Suite 200-B, Washington, D.C. 20036, [202] 293-7753)

Music for TV Dinners

The '60s

(Scamp)

Scamp's second collection of production music is even better than its predecessor, primarily because it works as an aural Polaroid of the swingin' London sound of that decade. Syd Dale's "Disc a Go Go" kicks it off in perfect hip-shaking style, only to top himself a few tracks later with its polar opposite, the restful yet invigorating travelogue known as "The Riviera Set," and an Alpertesque detour into Latin party rhythms with "Mexican Ding Dong." Keith Mansfield's "Sporting Life" would make the perfect victory anthem for any soccer match. These wonderful songs were composed primarily for mass consumption via educational films and grocery-store intercoms, but Laurie Johnson's frantic "Chase That Car" comes straight from *The Avengers*. All but forgotten – save for the occasional retro-chic appearance in modern cartoons or movies – these tunes are worth discovering. The only thing that could possibly blow my mind more would be a mood-song sampling of the '70s. Scamp, how 'bout it?

Swingin' Cheese

Croon Tunes and Kitscherama

(IRMA Molto Jazz)

Yesteryear's cheddar is today's cheeseburger, and this Italian import has rounded up 16 blue-plate specials of forgotten lounge. The world's loss is our gain. Pepe Jamarillo turns in the umpteenth cover of "Exotica," topped only by Roberto Delgado's *Hawaii Five-O* theme. The likes of Mel Torme, Englebert Humperdinck and Tony Osborne tackle beloved rock-era hits "Secret Agent Man," "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" and "A Hard Day's Night." Game show fans will get to dancing with Trudy Pitts' "The Spanish Flea." Jules Ruben and His Latin Ensemble close out the disc with "The Beethoven Rhumba" (roll over, indeed). I know there may be something lost in the translation, but I can't forgive the liner notes author for taking the Lord's name in vain by misspelling it as "Burt *Buch*arach."

Dimitri from Paris

Sacrebleu

(Atlantic)

Just now being issued stateside, French DJ Dimitri's Parisian soundscape is a fun and flighty tribute to the swinging '60s. Interspersed with dialogue snippets and the occasional ambient flourish, Sacrebleu offers more than an hour of loose and limber numbers for the *Breakfast at Tiffany's* set. The bubbly "Sacre Francais" sets the tone of things to come, notably a remake of Mancini's "Nothing to Lose" (through the able cords of a chanteuse), a faux TV theme ("Dirty Larry") and "Une Very Stylish Fille," which lovingly swipes a Schifrin sample. *Magnifique!*

Pop Boutique

Vol. 1

(Spinning Wheel)

The Germans are hereby forgiven for their love of Hasselhoff with this cool collection of funk-lounge soundtrack music from films that don't exist. Any of the dozen cuts would fit just fine within a spy-noir flick of your choice, Bond films included. As evidenced from the beginning (Nancy Holloway's "Sand and Rain"), no song is like the next, and no song is afraid to switch styles, either. Fast and furious, *Boutique* showcases some real (if wholly unknown) talents, from African Voodoo to The George King Organ Sounds. Anyone into swingin' soundtracks will relish this disc, and will take heart knowing a second volume is planned in '98 from this upstart label. (Spinning Wheel, Bahnhofstr.21, 84347 Pfarrkirchen, Germany)

Scoctopus

The In Sound from Octopus Records!

(Schema)

Following on the heels of Scamp's *TV Dinners* platters of production music is this Italian import of stock sounds from the '70s. While it has nothing on the Scamp series, it's a worthy find for fans of this anonymous genre. Though it begins in a fairly straightforward jazz direction, it grows funkier and swinging with cuts like "Frog in Love," "Climax" and "Games."

Acid Jazz on the Rocks

(IRMAmerica)

With a cover this cool, you'd expect the disc to be just as good, and it is. Doing a hell of a great job capturing the smoke-filled, neon-lit night life of any major metropolitan city, *On the Rocks* serves up a baker's dozen of loose, jazzy cuts – many of them very lounge-influenced, particularly Key Tronics Ensemble's "Anamaria," which sounds suspiciously like Pizzicato Five. Jestofunk, Live Tropical Fish and Instant Cities help transport you to a 3 a.m.-state-of-mind. Voo Doo Phunk closes out this top-notch collection with "Starsky," featuring a sampled cameo by Tom Brokaw!

Talkin' Verve with a Twist

(Verve)

Though you're apt to find this filed in the jazz section of your local record store, don't let that classification fool or deter you, as this is very much

a lounge compilation, and one so well-produced that it could proudly bear the quality *Ultra-Lounge* mark. Comprised mostly covers of '60s film themes, *Twist* – the latest entry in Verve's *Talkin' Verve* budget line – features such talents as Mel Torme, Quincy Jones, Xavier Cugat, Stan Getz and Count Basie. Mancini's *Peter Gunn* and *Pink Panther* themes are covered by Art Heatlie and the Electric Saxophone and Those Fantabulous Strings, respectively. Other staples getting a work-over are "James Bond Theme," "What's New, Pussycat?" and "The Girl from Ipanema."

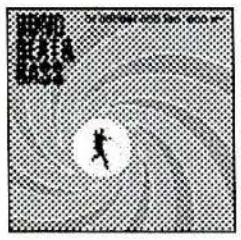
Crime Jazz
Music in the First Degree
Crime Jazz
Music in the Second Degree
(Rhino)

You can keep your "Satchmo" for all I care. Just give me Henry "88 Fingers" Mancini any day of the week. Thanks to Rhino, the crime jazz lover in you can overdose on that Hank and other torch-bearers (Quincy Jones, Stan Kenton, etc.) of the unheralded genre of American music. Those who liked the crime covers on *Ultra-Lounge: The Crime Scene* might find this even better, as many razor-sharp cuts among these two discs (sold separately) are as original as they get. Ballsy and brassy, these babies are loud at any volume. The first disc gives you time with "Staccato's Theme," the main title theme from "Touch of Evil," "M Squad Theme," "The Wild One," "Naked City" and the ol' reliable "Peter Gunn." For those a little light on the feet, there's "77 Sunset Strip Cha Cha." Disc 2 shackles you with Lalo Schifrin's "The Killer," "Prison Break," "Experiment in Terror" and "Perry Mason Theme." If there's a difference between the two discs, the latter may feature more obscure music. Both, however, are indispensable. This is as brazenly cool as reissues come. And wouldn't Saul Bass love that cover art?

The Burt Bacharach Songbook
(Varesé Vintage)

The master of the hummable pop melody is given due tribute in this 17-track collection, culled from covers - both well-known and unknown - of the man's hits. Jackie DeShannon practically made "What the World Needs Now" a household tune, so it's fitting that be the album's introduction. Other seminal renditions include Jack Jones' Vegas-style "Wives and Lovers" and Sandie Shaw's "(There's) Always Something There to Remind Me." Petula Clark delivers a great "Don't Make Me Over," while Roger Williams plinks away at the piano for "The Look of Love," an instrumental performance outdone by Ramsey Lewis' upbeat, jazzy "Do You Know the Way to San Jose." The Fifth Dimension, Dusty Springfield and Gene Pitney are among others turning in good work. Even artists one normally and rightfully fears (Anne Murray, Maureen McGovern) can't screw up songs this well-written.

WEIRD

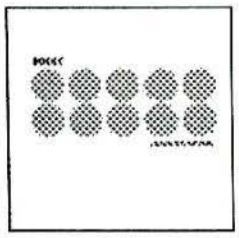


Bond, Beat & Bass
The James Bond Elektronika Themes
(Hypnotic/Cleopatra)

As David Arnold's *Shaken and Stirred* project and Moby's hit single have proven of late, the James Bond catalogue is one with great potential for adaptation by those future sounds of now. Taking it a step further is *Bond, Beat & Bass*, which brings together nine entirely unknown (to the mainstream, at least) artists and DJs and basically gives them *carte blanche* on the opening-credit themes we know and love so well. Strange thing is, it works. O.T. Zehn opens the disc with an original "Intro," perfectly placing an atmosphere of espionage into an all-electronic world. Monty Norman's "James Bond Theme" is next, given due respect by Voight Kampff. The team of Lindum & Lindum tackles John Barry's "007" signature theme, while others choose to reinvent songs from *Thunderball*, *Moonraker*, *Goldfinger* and *A View to a Kill* (with the latter two being done twice, for some reason). Because the artists strive to retain the basic melody of each song – no matter how much studio trickery and layering in which they're engaged – the disc remains entirely accessible. This is a good idea done great.

Megasoft Office '97
(Chipie/Tinder)

With its 12 tracks purportedly designed and programmed to simulate (and therefore stimulate) the phases of the workday, *Megasoft Office* would seem to be a novelty exercise in pretentious ambiance. On the contrary, it's a real trip-hop gem whose electronic flourishes sound like *anti*-music at first, slowly revealing its rich pleasures only upon repeated listening. It is almost as if you never hear a song quite the same way twice. The debut project of France's F Communications label, *Megasoft* spotlights fresh talents like A Reminiscent Drive, whose "NYC Dharma" is a plucky number to accompany that harried rush-hour drive home. The only track to feature vocals, "Bewildered" by Nova Nova, rivals any of Portishead's output. This easily went down as one of last year's most pleasant surprises.



Moby
I Like to Score
(Elektra)

A rather ingenious way of introducing Moby to a wider audience, *I Like to Score* rounds up 12 of the electronic favorite's soundtrack contributions (hence, the titular pun). Radio has been kind to the "re-version" of the "James Bond Theme" from *Tomorrow Never Dies*, and rightly so, but it's far from being the album's peak. Blaxploitation gets a wonderfully funky theme with the title track and the *Twin Peaks* theme gets twisted into the ethereal "Go." The music drives harder with "Oil 1" from *The Saint*, but most notable are Moby's excursions into the majestic and spiritual side of his music on "Novio" and "God Moving Over the Face of the Waters." With a variety of styles on display, this may be his most enjoyable release yet. Other films represented include *Scream*, *Heat*, *Joe's Apartment* and *Cool World*.

Maximum Electronica
Volume One
(Elektra)

Produced as a continuous stream of music, the *Maximum Electronica* compilation collects future-is-now efforts of bands, with mixed success. Among the good are Björk's "Hyper-Ballad," Moby's "Feeling So Real," the stellar "Out of Space" from Prodigy and a wonderful remix of Stereolab's "Metronomic Underground" from *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*. Among the bad are a few non-names far too techno to be of any real value. But all in all, this is far from being terrible, especially at its budget price.

Propellerheads
Bang On!
(DreamWorks)

Released in preparation for their debut album, the *Bang On!* five-track EP is a fine introduction to the UK's newest electronic sensation, the Propellerheads. After a string of well-received singles in England (which can be found on the *Chemical Generation* and *Shaken and Stirred* albums reviewed here), the 'heads are prepared to take the States by storm. So far, they're really the only electronica band to know what to do with a slide guitar. I like them because their sound leans toward John Barry and secret agents rather than the latest dance club beat. Check out the title track and

"Spybreak!" for proof. Writing this on the eve of the U.S. release of the full-length *Decksandrumsandrockandroll*, I have an itching feeling they're going to be *huge*.

Anthems for a Chemical Generation

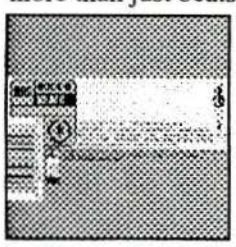
(Virgin)

Trainspotting author Irvine Welsh assembled a slew of the better Britpop and electronica acts around to prove that music is "the best drug." For the most part, he's correct. 808 State begins the album with "Pacific -202," which might seem indistinguishable from other techno songs, were it not for the heartbreaking horn riff that continues throughout. From well-known hits (The Stone Roses' "Fools Gold" and Orbital's "Chime") to newer acts (Underworld and Primal Scream among them), *Anthems* has them all.

Slow Death in the Metronome Factory

(World Domination)

"THIS IS NOW!" proclaims the minimalist cover to this 13-track compilation of instrumental tracks culled from 'round the globe. Aiming toward the more melodic bent of the electronica and trance genres, *Slow Death* showcases acts hailing from the U.S. to the UK and beyond. Impressing most are the States' own Scenic, Tokyo's Sugar Plant, Germany's Rossburger Report and London's Colin Newman. Shaming itself is Seattle outfit Critters Buggin. Many will be turned off by its cold veneer, but if anything, it proves that electronic music does have a future, so long if it's more than just beats.



Big Rock'N Beats

(Wax Trax!/TVT)

Just beats.

The Sound of Infinity

Trip-Hop from Outer Space

(IRMAmerica/Tinder)

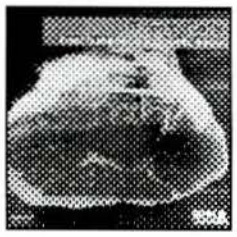
I'm unsure as to what "outer space" has to do with this compilation, but hey, whatever. If you're good, you can call yourself anything you like. (Now putting zebras on the cover, on the other hand...) A loose companion disc to IRMA's *Acid Jazz on the Rocks*, *Infinity* is a little more down-tempo and loosely structured, though sharing some of the same artists. DJ Sensei performs "Sensei's Theme," while the Electro Disciples offer up a "Cosmic Blast" of trippy slo-mo music. Voo Doo Phunk, Black Mighty Wax and Dub Alchemist also contribute worthy tracks to a fine, if somewhat anonymous, collection.

Air

Moon Safari

(Source/Caroline)

Built as a sturdy bridge between lounge and electronica, Air's *Moon Safari* is *the* finest electronica album to date. The brainchild of Frenchmen duo Nicolas Godin and Jean Benoit Dunckel, the album is more electron*ic* than true electron*ica*, seamlessly merging blips and beeps with sleazy Moogs and strings to create perhaps the first fully loaded easy listening record. Casting spy-like aspersions, the opening "La Femme D'Argent" sets the slow and steady stage for the record, which kicks into gear for the ready-made cheesy dance hit "Sexy Boy," which ostensibly is about a space monkey. The soothing voice of Beth Hirsch takes lead on three of the album's 10 tracks, propelling what would have been fine instrumentals to soaring emotional heights, particulary with "You Make It Easy," an apt summation as any for Air's ability to craft such an exiquisite album as if it were something as simple as making a sandwich. Those heights are even *exceeded* by the eighth track, "Ce Matin La," whose horns take the cut into Bacharach territory, suggesting that Burt had sent his incredibly orchestrated self into the stratosphere. Brilliant, cinematic and highly listenable – even to those who hate electronica – *Moon Safari* is currently the mark by which all others will be judged. Buckle up and take flight.



Prime Cuts

From Funky Breaks to Funky House

In Flux

Drum 'n' Bass in Movement

(IRMAmerica/Tinder)

The Italian importers at IRMAmerica are serving up a double helping of new directions in dance music with the one-two punch of *Prime Cuts* and *In Flux*. The latter is a fairly straightforward drum-and-bass collection with an emphasis on the spacey. IRMA's usual suspects DJ Sensei, Dub Alchemist and Science Force all contribute their respective celestial highlights. Most unusual is the inclusion of a Slok remix of the Average White Band classic-rock staple "Livin' on Borrowed Time." Whereas *In Flux* ends up revealing nothing new (but that's not a bad thing), *Prime Cuts* may surprise. With more of an acid jazz feel, the album reels funky gem after funky gem. After an especially strong start with Voo Doo Phunk, the disc offers a mad harmonica mix of Jestofunk's "I'm Gonna Love You" and a sax-ified take on Typhorns' "Nightlife." The greatest cut turns out to be "First Job," from Kekkotronics & LTJ, which should come as no surprise to fans of IRMA's outstanding *Montefiori Cocktail* project, as the works share the same masterminds. Fans of the genre can do no wrong with either album, but vote for *Prime Cuts* as the one most likely to convert legions of new enthusiasts.

Morcheeba

Big Calm

(China/Sire)

While not an trip-hop act *per se*, Morcheeba gives off the same kind of laid-back, mind-blowing vibes, yet is measurably more innovative. It helps that the singer, the smooth Skye Edwards, has a gifted, gliding voice, and one that can handle a multitude of musical styles, which the band is inventive enough to experiment with other musical styles; "Part of the Process" brings a countrified fiddle into the mix, while "Shoulder Holster" is heavy on the sitar. Other cuts veer toward rap, reggae, old-school soul and, perhaps best, secret-agent stylings of "The Music That We Hear (Moog Island)." Usually, an album this over-the-place would have several strikes against it, but Morcheeba pulls its ambition off with a winning sense of cohesion.

Karnak

Karnak

(Tinder)

A hot commodity in its native Brazil, the group Karnak has embraced the musical stylings of its brothers the world over, resulting in anything-goes sound that melds unlikely partners as Scottish bagpipes and Russian operas. Essentially finding influences in pop, funk and reggae, Karnak's music is undeniably interesting. From the album's opening strains of "Alma Não Tem Cor," you'll believe this is like nothing you've ever heard before, a soulful soup in which every genre is swimming. My complaint rests with frontman André Abujamra, whose unnerving vocals belie the beauty of the music beneath. You wouldn't be off-track to term this project bizarre.

Los Activos

Hasta los Huesos

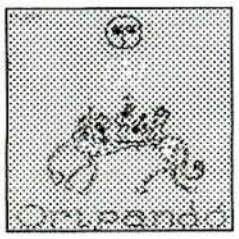
(Tinder)

The most intriguing aspect of Los Activos is not that the group was

formed to keep Spanish youth out of trouble, but rather *what* the group does. On the surface, they perform flamenco music, but rise above the mere label via innovative use of non-musical instruments, whether they be doors, washboards or their own hands or feet. If the theater group Stomp recorded flamenco, then you'd begin to have an idea what this is all about.

Henri Dikongué
C'est La Vie
(Tinder)

African-born Dikongué has created a quiet and confident album in *C'est La Vie*. Look no further than the opener "Ndutu" to see how; with sparse instrumentation, the song glides along the air, held up only by the pluckings of Dikongué's acoustic guitar and the lilting chorus of the singers behind that. Though later numbers are more plugged in, the beauty of the music proves that it can extend beyond any language barriers.



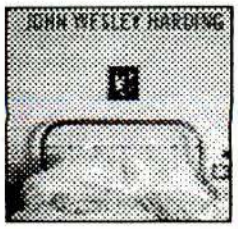
Ea!
Oripandó
(Tinder)

Combining time-honored flamenco music with modern jazz stylings, the Spanish group Ea! makes you feel right at home, provided that home were an authentic Mexican restaurant. Quite adept at capturing the music of their homeland, Ea! finds a secret weapon of sorts in the vocals of one miss Pilar, who sounds like she's straining to infuse each and every word with burning passion.

more ROCK

'70s Party Killers
(Rhino)

This disc makes me ashamed to say I was born in the '70s, but then again, that's really the point of the whole thing. That particular ten-year span gave us some of the worst popular music of all-time, and the archivists at Rhino have fished through 25 volumes of their *Have a Nice Day* series to find the absolute bottom o' the barrel. Among the stinkers: Sammy Davis Jr. and the Mike Curb Generation doing "The Candy Man," Starland Vocal Band's inexplicable Grammy-winning "Afternoon Delight" and "Muskrat Love" by Captain & Tenille. Is this the appropriate medium to admit I had a huge crush on Toni Tenille then? Regardless, it's not something I'm proud of, and I'd bet the same can be said for a lot of these artists, especially those who are all but forgotten: Paper Lace? Bo Donaldson and the Heywoods? Who the hell are they? Exactly. "Feelings" and "Sometimes When We Touch" make me puke, but Rupert Holmes' "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)" seems like heaven in comparison. A fun trip back into bad times, for those who know better.



John Wesley Harding
Awake
(Zero Hour)

Though I'm not one to plan far ahead in advance, it's certain I'll be listening to this album for the better part of the year. It's *that* fantastic. His best album in seven years, *Awake* marks Wes' first foray into "gangsta folk," as the early "Your Ghost (Don't Scare Me No More)" puts drum loops behind Wes' vocals to create an eerie beat. The production is brilliant, and only grows with cuts like "Window Seat," a joyous song with a silly tale, and "It's All My Fault," featuring the hauntingly beautiful voice of Kelly Hogan. The album ends as it begins, with the hopeful strains of a would-be bubblegum hit by the name of "Just Woke Up," in which Wes finds much sunny optimism amidst changes in his life. The orchestrations and instrumentations are unusual, but fulfilling. *Awake*'s power-pop approach suits Wes just fine, and he clearly feels at home, even if his horns and Hammonds have been usurped by Moogs and mellotrons.

Album of the Moment

Songs for the Jet Set
(Jetset)

I hesitate to even write this review, knowing full well even the highest praise cannot do this disc justice. Simply put, this was the best album to see the light of day in 1997, and for good reason: It's note-perfect. A neo-lounge project from prolific English producer Mike Alway, *Jet Set* is a dozen songs you've never heard before, by almost as many bands of which you've never heard. Inexplicably, this little mysterious package – enigma, even – that stumbled into my life purely by accident quickly bore a hole straight into my heart. This pop pacemaker will never leave.

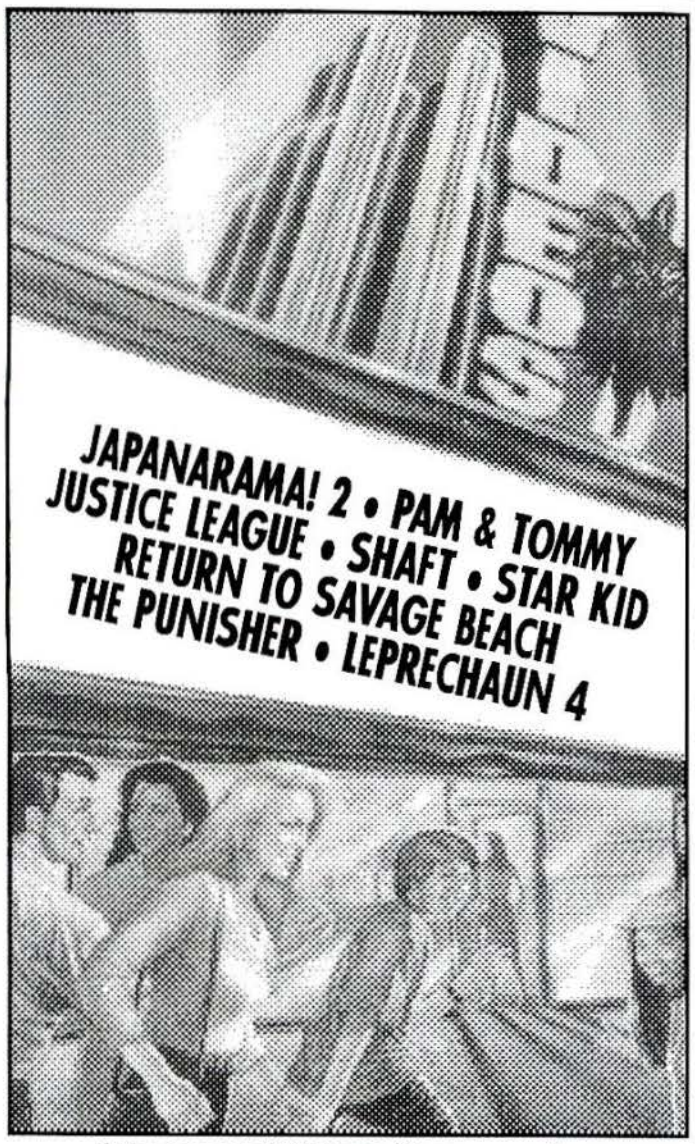
The album opens on a high note with a brief (almost ambient) intro, which segues right into the Stereolab-ish track "Leslie Phillips in Santiago" by Tomorrow's World. The band tops itself later with a bouncy take on "Kites Are Fun," whose whistles and almost childlike phrasing strongly encourage singalong.

Going one better is Wallpaper, with the plucky, eponymous track "Wallpaper," doing its best to capture metropolitan atmosphere at once bustling and relaxed. Jetting off to a more exotic locale is South American Getaway with "Expo Tenerife," sprinkled with laid-back Latin spice.

Loveletter provides the disc's first cover, that of Bob Crewe's *Barbarella* theme, performed here with due reverence rather than high camp, and followed up with an equally honorable rendering of the Cowsills' "We Can Fly." Most unusual are the psychedelic circus-minded contributions of Everlasting Gobstopper, fronted by a 14-year-old girl whose vocals are as assured and aggressive of those even two or three times her age.

Released here on the minuscule Jetset label, *Jet Set* marks the inaugural project of England-based if... Records. As Alway himself explains, "if... records is a genuine and original fantasy-pop label and *Songs for the Jet Set* a kind of portfolio to display our philosophy in an attempt to reach people and open doors. We are unique in that, as such, none of the 'groups' at this point actually exist outside of the studio context. The project is – for better or worse – the work of my own imagination with the initial LP and subsequent albums being very controlled and conceptually watertight. But there is, I hope, a certain artistry and eclecticism inherent in our work that raises it above the classification of mere novelty pop."

Indeed, it does. "What pop needs today are more pies in more faces and to take itself less seriously," Alway proclaims. Normally, a 30-minute album would merit suspicion, but in the case of *Jet Set*, the idea is brevity, not lack of material. It harkens back to the carefree days when all a pop writer needed was less than three minutes to change the world, if only for a while. The efforts of all those involved here accomplish the same; listening to this disc *will* make your day brighter, wiping away problems like Dawn does grease spots. And with promises of more like-minded projects, individual band albums and perhaps even a *Jet Set 2*, 1998's looking mighty sunny.



Japanarama! Volume Two
(1997)
Video International
★★★★★

Ask and ye shall receive. Last issue, we raved about the wild Japanese TV compilation *Japanarama!*, and now we're prepared to do the same with the quick follow-up, *Japanarama! Volume Two*. Even after multiple viewings of the first tape, it is still mind-boggling to see what the Japanese can get away with on the tube. Luckily, Richard Humbert has captured it all for proof.

As with the first, we still get lots of crazy commercials, such as ones for an all-Japanese production of the musical *Annie* and for toilet deodorizer (I get sick just thinking about all the seafood stench), with many of the spots featuring American sell-out celebs. Among them: Dennis Rodman, Madonna, Quentin Tarantino, Liv Tyler, Beavis and Butt-head, Jodie Foster, Antonio Banderas, Brad Pitt, Mel Gibson, Demi Moore, Ringo Starr and Bruce Willis, who simply sits on a ladder, watches feathers fall around him and exclaims with a smile, "It's dream time!" Boy, is it ever. Also as with the first, we still get clips from strange films and bizarre musical numbers.

The real reason, however, to watch *Japanarama! Volume 2* is for the sampling of shows programmed by our far-out Far East friends. The game shows in particular seem designed solely to hurt and humiliate its participants. For example:

• On *Ultra Quiz* (misnamed since there are no questions asked), contestants spar with masked pro wrestlers on a floating ring in the ocean. Each round ends when the pro tosses the hapless player into the water, where chum is then thrown to attract the nearby shark. Because watching a guy get his leg swallowed is funny!

• Six guys hit the streets to see can get their underwear the dirtiest. Hence, scenes of grown men rubbing their bottoms in trash cans and on tailpipes.

• Two men play tug-of-war using only clothespins attached to their tongues.

• Various items are rolled down a tube that empties into a player's mouth. This would be do big deal, except that said objects include a scorpion and a flaming hot coal.

• A couple of apparently thick-skulled men bounce a bowling ball up a ramp with their heads.

• A variety of hot and sour things is poured into men's mouths to see who can stand it the longest. The contest almost ends when lemon juice is poured into one contestant's eyes.

• A man with a chunk of meat strapped to his forehead sticks his head into a corridor, whereupon a hungry kimodo dragon is unleashed toward him.

• Two guys in jockstraps pull appliances around the room using only a cord attached to the material covering their butt cracks.

• Stripped of his clothes, a man is smothered in butter from head to toe and placed in a cage with half a dozen dogs.

• Two men play chicken with a firecracker, each waiting for the other to let it go before it explodes in their fingers.

Other programs deal not in games, but remain just as cruel nonetheless. Por ejemple:

• A young man chows down on beans, eggs and milk in order to work up some noxious fumes, and then farts in the faces of unsuspecting sleepers.

• For more violent wake-up calls, men with machine guns surround someone in a peaceful slumber and open fire.

• A wrestling match between a guy and some sap in a bear costume ends when a solid punch results in a jetstream of blood spurting from the bear's eye.

• A workplace sitcom finds laughs in the plight of a bucktoothed businessman who literally is caught with his pants down, depositing diarrhea in the women's bathroom.

• In a *Candid Camera*-type segment, we watch as a loving couple strolling down the street suddenly stumble among a giant glue trap.

Most notable is Japan's continued efforts to demean women. It's all in plentiful supply in vivid color here, including:

• In-awe Japanese men touching, groping and *weighing* the bare, silicon-enhanced breasts of skanky American strippers.

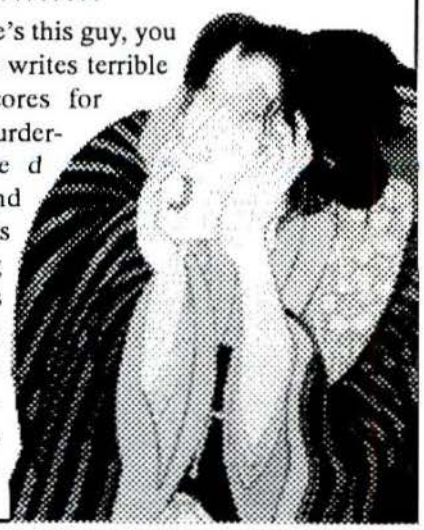
• A bikini tricycle race! Watch out for those bumps, ladies! The cameraman sure is!

• A quiz show is set in a hot tub. The buzzer, however, is at such a distance from the tub that, in order to answer, the naked women have to emerge from the water to hit it.

• For weather reports, a woman in a metallic bunny outfit goes out in some public place and pops pieces of her costume off before spouting the skinny on precipitation.

Like the first volume of *Japanarama!*, you won't understand a word, nor do you need to. Comedy this low and shameless requires no translation. I laughed my ass off, and you will, too, provided you shed any veneer of political correctness beforehand. It is hysterical, surreal and infinitely entertaining. If our many blooper shows included material of this type, I'd watch them week after week. C'mon, Rupert Murdoch, bring this stuff stateside! Until then, however, we'll just have to pin our hopes on Rick producing a *Volume 3*. (For ordering, see ad elsewhere in this issue.)

Scoring
(1995)
Rocket Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

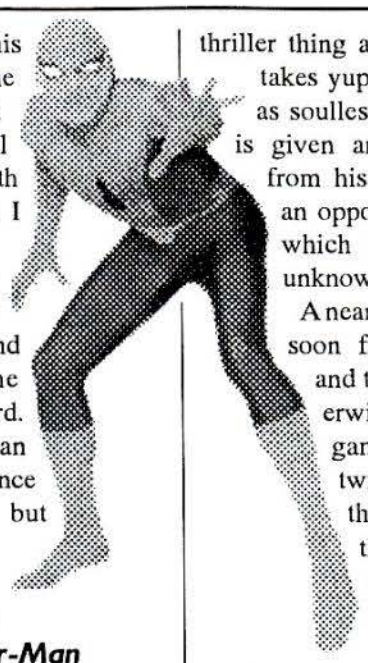


So there's this guy, you see, and he writes terrible musical scores for terrible, murder-themed movies. And when he's not scoring flicks, he's scoring with chicks. Thus, *Scoring*.

Videos reviewed in **HITCH** receive star ratings based not on artistic merit, but on levels of enjoyment, from ★☆☆☆☆ (as much fun as a funeral) to ★★★★★ (fun, fun, fun 'til daddy takes the TV away).

Get it? Suspense sets in when his life begins eerily to imitate the movie he's working on. But that all takes a backseat to all the sex. This guy has sex with more women in this film than I could count.

Not that I tried, because not even the bare flesh of former Playmates Wendy Hamilton and Shae Marks could keep me awake watching this turgid turd. You'd think *someone* could do an erotic thriller that has substance between the sex scenes, but *Scoring* is not it.



Spider-Man: The Amazing Spider-Man
(1979)
Rhino Home Video
★★★★★

In the pilot film for the sporadic series, respected citizens are suddenly turning into zombies and committing dastardly crimes unbecoming of them. Wimpy physics student Peter Parker (Nicholas Hammond) thinks it's weird and wonders how he can get pictures of them to sell to cranky ol' Mr. Jameson (Mr. Tate from *Bewitched*) over at *The Daily Bugle*.

Then, during an experiment with radioactive waste (kids, ain't it fun to experiment with radioactive waste?), Peter is bitten by a spider, infusing him with the ability to climb walls like a mofo. As Peter plays around with her newfound power, we are treated to some of the shoddiest blue-screen effects ever put on film. Not stopping there, Peter sews himself a costume and devises a rope shooter strapped to his wrist.

Disguise complete, he goes off and fights ninjas and saves the occasional suicidal old man from jumping out a building. Michael Pataki shows up every now and then to bark orders as cartoonish Capt. Barbera. I don't know who plays Aunt May, but she appears to have Alzheimer's. Name star Lisa Eilbacher appears as Peter's token love interest for the week.

At the end, Jameson asks Peter how he was able to get all these wonderful pictures of the culprits and Spider-Man. "I believe," Peter answers, and walks off triumphantly. I believe, too, Peter...that your show was the greatest in web-slinging, funkadelic fun.

The Game
(1997)
PolyGram Home Video
★★★★☆

After *Alien*^{3} and *Seven*, director David Fincher seems to have this psychological thriller thing all sewn up. In *The Game*, he takes yuppie paranoia to its extremities, as soulless millionaire Michael Douglas is given an intriguing birthday present from his wayward brother Sean Penn: an opportunity to play "the game," of which the rules and object remain unknown variables.

A near unwilling participant, Douglas soon finds himself watched, trailed and trapped at every turn of his otherwise humdrum daily life. The game becomes so convoluted, twisted and downright dangerous that his life appears to hang on the line, causing him (and the audience) to wonder if the so-called game is for keeps.

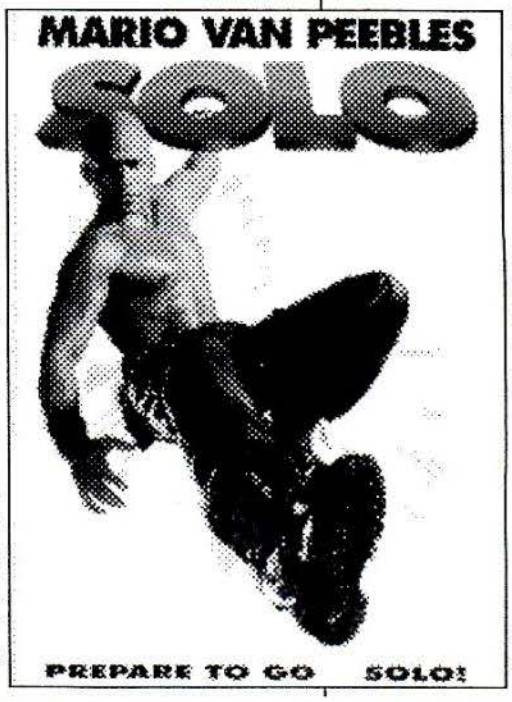
Despite playing perhaps the coldest asshole on cinematic record, Douglas wins our sympathy as his mundane existence unravels into a nightmare. Fincher does an extraordinary job with atmosphere and suspense, botched only in a slow build-up and a preposterous ending that hinges on a really big "if."

E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial
(1982)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

Having not seen the one-time box-office champ in nearly 10 years, I was surprised to find that maturity reveals *E.T.* to *not* be the frame-for-frame masterpiece we all remember it to be. It's still good, of course, but it's far from the storytelling excellence Steven Spielberg found in earlier works *Jaws* and *Close Encounters* (heck, even *Poltergeist*).

Everyone's familiar with the plot, so I won't bother rehashing it here. Suffice to say, though, it feels thin. I remembered it to be a much better developed and character-driven piece than it really is. Some of it is just too damn whimsical for its own good, a problem that Stevie has had a lot ever since. Still, there's a bit of magic of it, and we all feel like suckers when our heart skips a beat as those bicycles start soaring ... every single time.

The recent video re-release includes interviews with the cast and crew that offer considerable insight into the creation of this landmark film. It also reveals that Robert McNaughton (the oldest of the three kids) has grown into a very ugly adult. So *that's* what happened to him.



Solo
(1996)
Columbia/Tri-Star Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

In what is essentially just a vanity project for its star, Mario Van Peebles plays Solo, a bulletproof, emotionless cyborg created by the United States military for devious overseas missions. In the case of his maiden effort, he helps destroy an airstrip in a small, South American village, where he befriends the ubiquitous tot, grabs rattlesnakes by the neck and drops baddie Bill Sadler on his knee, cracking him in two.

Earlier, though, Solo plays with eggs as he learns about the English language. "Define joke," Solo says. "The egg is a joke?"

No, Mario, *you* are a joke. I don't know a soul – outside of the ever-expanding Van Peebles family – who would pay money to see Sonny Spoon play a New Jack Terminator. Obviously, the producers thought *someone* would. They were wrong.

Dark Angel: The Ascent
(1991)
Paramount Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Satan's daughter (Angela Featherstone) decides to pass over into the real world, so she emerges naked from the sewer and soon falls in love with a guy who wears too many *Miami Vice* pastels. Whenever she gets mad at someone, her eyes turn red and she goes for the kill...because she's a devil, you know.

In one particularly laughable scene, she and her boyfriend make love amidst hundreds of candles (by the time you'd get all those lit, I would have lost the mood), and she gets so excited that her horns sprout up and her wings start flapping, *and it doesn't bother him in the slightest.*

From Full Moon Entertainment, *Dark Angel* is notable only for being written by Matthew Bright, who gave us the great *Freeway*, and should be doing better work than this.

Suspiria
(1976)
Magnum Entertainment
★★★☆☆

In an early Dario Argento film, Jessica Harper plays a naive New York ballet student

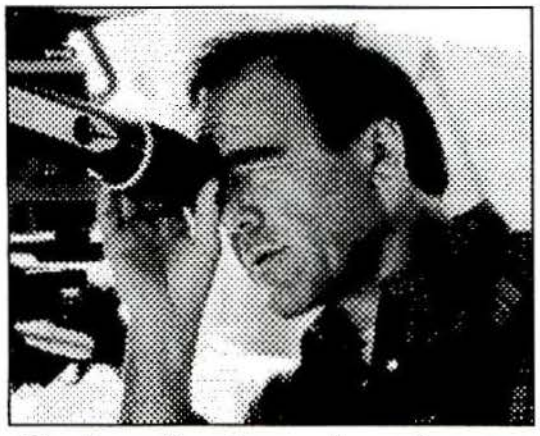
who transfers to a mysterious Italian dance academy, where she makes a disturbing discovery about its hallowed halls. But first, she's attacked by a bat and maggots fall from the ceiling, but that's nothing to the fates that befall three students who are murdered (one by noose, one by having her head separated by a sheet of glass and one by falling into a room of barbed wire) or the blind piano teacher whose throat is ripped out by his own seeing-eye dog.

While Argento is always a master visualist, primarily in his use of lighting and colors, his pacing as a screenwriter lags. The horrific set pieces are well-done and eerie; it's the scenes of exposition between them that could use some tightening. The end title card reads "You have been watching *Suspiria*."

U-Turn
(1997)
Columbia/Tri-Star Home Video

★☆☆☆☆

It's an "Oliver Stone movie" as opposed to an "Oliver Stone film." But a rose is a rose is a rose, and this sucks just as much as you would expect it to. Why hasn't anyone besides me caught on to the fact that Ollie is just a terrible director who's hiding this fact behind his numerous stock and lens changes, not to mention the constantly moving camera? *Anyone* can move a camera, Ollie; it takes talent to



Clueless director and mushroom monger Oliver Stone on the set of *U-Turn*, not knowing what he's doing

hold it still and come up with something interesting.

Sean Penn stars as a drifter whom we care nothing about, stranded in a dustbowl of a town and hot for monosyllabic Jennifer Lopez, who wants him to kill her husband (hammy Nick Nolte), who wants him to kill her. For some reason, Jon Voight is a blind Indian who drinks Dr Pepper.

Only the few scenes with Billy Bob Thornton and Joaquin Phoenix have any kick; the rest just leave you checking the time. To my frustration, *U-Turn* has about six different endings, and it just won't quit. It's like *After Hours* meets *Natural Born Killers*, except that it's not any good. I mean, *c'mon*, Ollie, give us a break.

The Food of the Gods
(1976)
Vestron Video

★★★★☆

Giant members of the animal kingdom on the rampage? It can only be the work of one nature-obsessed Mr. Bert I. Gordon, and indeed, *The Food of the Gods* is. Like anyone else dare claim it.

Based upon "a portion of the novel by H.G. Wells," this tale has football player Marjoe Gortner riding horseback with friends, when one pal is summarily attacked and killed by a giant wasp. To get help, Marjoe comes across a farm house, where he is predictably attacked by a giant chicken, whom he quickly pitchforks.

"Where in the hell did you get those goddamned chickens?" he asks the farmer's wife, Hollywood legend Ida Lupino, in a huff. She explains that the bubbling goo from the ground – "given to us by the Lord," hence the title – has been mixed with chicken feed for a real farm animal treat. Lupino is soon attacked by giant worms in her kitchen, while her poor husband succumbs to a band of giant rats as he is driving home. In typical Gordon style, the animal attack scenes switch freely from models to the real thing, i.e. field mice crawling over a Matchbox car.

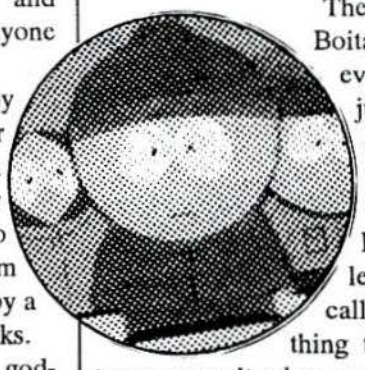
As if you needed to be told, the final half hour has every surviving character holed up in a house as the giant rats surround the home, following Marjoe's unsuccessful mass electrocution of the giant rats, which directly follows his successful sabotage of the giant wasps' giant nest. Just after preggo Belinda Balaski gives birth, a flood from the exploded dam (triggered by Marjoe, natch) washes most of the giant rats off the house. Those that don't are picked off by the mighty trigger finger of Marjoe. Be sure and have your frame advance function of your VCR ready here, and tell me that the filmmakers weren't really shooting these rats; seeing one lose an eye in bloody fashion is hard evidence to refute.

Soon as the drowned giant rats are rounded up into a pile for burning, two jars of the food washes downstream, whereupon it is consumed from cows. Said cows produce milk which winds up in the lunchroom of some innocent schoolchildren. Whether this became the focus of the non-Gordon sequel, *Gnaw: Food of the Gods II*, I don't know.

The Spirit of Christmas
(1995)
bootleg

★★★★★

As the five-minute genesis for the hit Comedy Central animated series *South Park*, the short *The Spirit of Christmas* is done in everything *but* the spirit of Christmas. The series' four young cardboard cut-out stars are singing holiday tunes when Jesus arrives. They think he wants to kill Kyle for being Jewish, but he simply wants directions to the mall. The kids take the son of God to the shopping Mecca, where he challenges Santa Claus to a fight to the finish. Both Jesus and Kringle use kung-fu moves on one another.



Then femme skater Brian Boitano shows up and tells everyone they should just get along. So they do, and discover the true meaning of Christmas: presents. Foul-mouthed, sacrilegious, crude, politically incorrect – everything the Rankin-Bass cartoons weren't when you and I were growing up. And thank goodness, or I'd be more warped than I am already.

Cronos
(1992)
Vidmark Entertainment

★★★☆☆

Mimic's Guillermo del Toro directed this odd, Mexican update of *Frankenstein*. A kind, elderly antiques dealer unwittingly owns a 16th-century statue that houses a golden bug. When wound, this bug (think *Hellraiser*'s puzzle box) stabs the owner with its needle-sharp legs, giving him doses of eternal life. The dealer simply thinks he's getting younger-looking, but that doesn't stop him from letting this "Cronos device" crawl over his chest.

This fountain of youth does have its side effects, though, like licking puddles of blood off public restroom floors. Freak of nature Ron Perlman, as a lackey goon, wants the bug for his boss, and kills the dealer in order to get it. Trouble is, the dealer never can die, and – rotting flesh somewhat intact – he continues to prowl the streets and taunt Perlman.

While intelligent and classy, *Cronos* is not the least bit scary for a horror film, even on a psychological level. What does work is the relationship between the dealer and his granddaughter, who offers unconditional love even when her elder is a chalk-white corpse.

Troll
(1986)
Vestron Video

★★★☆☆

Not long after book critic Michael Moriarty and his family – toothy former *Charlie's Angel* Shelley Hack and their two kids – move into a modest apartment building,

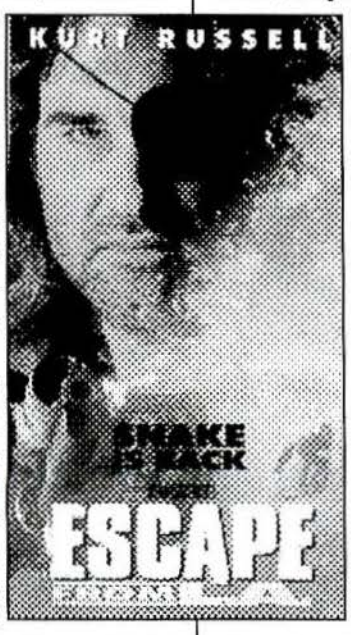
his pigtailed daughter (the poor studio head's Heather O'Rourke) finds a troll in the laundry room who proceeds to possess her soul.

Said troll causes the little girl to go loop-de-loop and grab neighbor Sonny Bono by the undershirt and scream "Ratburgers!" in his face. Later, she turns him into a giant grub-worm, but not until he nauseates as a single swinger in an Oriental robe (somebody please call a subcommittee). Other neighbor Gary Sandy (not-so-fresh from *WKRP*) is offed just as efficiently. Post-*SNL*ers Brad Hall and Julia Louis-Dreyfus also find themselves turned into plant food. June Lockhart, the old witch who lives upstairs and has a singing mushroom for a pet, simply gets transformed into a tree trunk. The object? Turn the whole building into a forest so the troll's little, cheap-looking monster pals can frolic freely. By the end, the building has sprouted green tentacles.

The two kids are the real stars here, to use the term loosely. Hack just stands stupefied with her crimped hair, while Moriarty humiliates himself in a lip synch/dance/seizure to "Summertime Blues." I remember my Uncle Bill took my brothers and me to see this Charles Band production at the French Market Mall, where just one year earlier he had taken us to see the like-minded *Ghoulies*, which is just as mediocre.

John Carpenter's Escape from L.A.
(1996)
Paramount Home Video
★★★★★

Everyone's favorite one-eyed, post-apocalyptic antihero – Snake Plissken, of course – is back in John Carpenter's sequel to his 1980 cult hit, *Escape from New York*. While a massive earthquake has separated La-La Land from the rest of California and become a heavily reinforced prison state, Snake is still Snake – sneering, stubbly and set on pissing people off.



After the President's daughter joins a terrorist squad in possession of a doomsday contraption that can wipe out the world's power, Snake (throaty Kurt Russell) is recruited by the feds to enter L.A. and retrieve the device. To make him undertake the impossible mission, they inject him with a deadly timebomb of a virus. Arriving in sin central, Snake goes head-to-head with machine-gun surfers, an evil plastic surgeon, Steve Buscemi and other various miscreants. Even subjected to a basketball game from hell, Snake manages to survive everything thrown his way. The final battle takes place at a Disneyland knock-off as he and his rebel pals attack via hang gliders.

Escape from L.A. is infinitely better than *New York*, mostly because it refuses to take itself seriously, yet still plays it that way. Carpenter's original film has its share of fervent followers who see it as gospel, but this sequel has more fun in it. Kurt Russell (who co-wrote the script) looks like he's having a ball, even though he never cracks a smile. With hip cameos from Bruce Campbell, Pam Grier, Peter Fonda and the shark from *Jaws*, what's not to like? Figure in the sheer visceral kick of seeing L.A. destroyed in the first three minutes and you have to answer "nothing."

Monster Mania
(1997)
A&E Home Video
★★★★☆

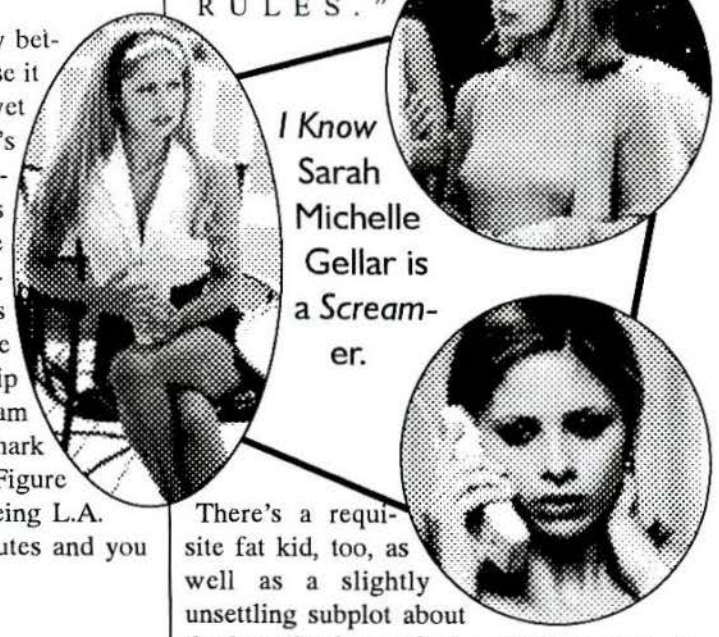
Crotchety old Jack Palance hosts this one-hour, made-for-cable look at monster movies. It focuses mainly on the Universal monster onslaught of the '30s and '40s, but touches briefly on the atomic age terrors from outer space of the '50s before coming full circle to the present-day remakes of the classics, from *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* to *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

Most impressive, however, is that the documentary starts with the creation of films itself, displaying scenes of Thomas Edison's 10-minute *Frankenstein*, which are amazing. Effective clips from other noted silents, from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to *The Phantom of the Opera*, are shown. Despite higher pedigree, this is not to be confused with Goodtimes' superior tape of the same name.

The Monster Squad
(1987)
Columbia/Tri-Star Home Video
★★★☆☆

Having a group of monster-obsessed kids fight the objects of their obsessions is not an altogether bad idea. Blame the execution. Dracula, Frankenstein, the Werewolf, the Mummy and the Creature from the Black Lagoon are all here in their blood-curling glory, but the pint-sized heroes are so nerdy and annoying that you wouldn't mind seeing them lose this battle.

To give you an idea, the group's leader (Andre Gower) wears a homemade T-shirt that reads, "STEPHEN KING RULES."



There's a requisite fat kid, too, as well as a slightly unsettling subplot about the boys having to find a virgin as part of a spell to rid the earth of the monsters, so they use the six-year-old kid sister.

From the creative team of Fred Dekker (*Night of the Creeps*) and Shane Black (*Lethal Weapon*), *The Monster Squad* could have been a prepubescent *Ghostbusters*. Instead, it's just a passable way to while away an afternoon. You'll hate yourself for it, however, in the final scene, when the U.S. Army arrives to fight the monsters and finds the work has already been done. The kids take credit for the deed. "Who are you?" asks the general, and Andre wastes no time pulling a Xeroxed business card from his pocket and saying with a smirk, "We're The Monster Squad!" High-fives all around.

I Know What You Did Last Summer
(1997)
Columbia/Tri-Star Home Video
★★★☆☆

Scream 2
(1997)
Dimension Home Video
★★★★★

No, it's no *Scream*, but it's worth a watch. Taking a cue from William Castle's *I Saw What You Did*, Jim Gillespie's *I Know What You Did Last Summer* finds its share of scares, thanks mostly to clever *Scream* scribe Kevin Williamson.

Jennifer Love Hewitt and Sarah Michelle Gellar are the three-named stars of the film, which finds them running for their lives from a hook-carrying killer in a fisherman's slicker, following a late-night car accident in which the gals and their boyfriends leave the victim for dead in the bottom of the lake. It's not long before the fishstick emerges from his watery grave to begin the slice 'n' dice machinations learned from standard serial-killer school.

Too Hot for TNT?

Breasts are a staple of B-movies, and although we at **HITCH** *completely* understand why bare ones must be edited out for basic cable, a disturbing new trend has arisen (particularly on Papa Ted's TNT network) in which *bra-clad* breasts are excised as well.

Even despite the inherent novelty of seeing Burt Reynolds race cars while wearing a chicken suit, there is no real reason to sit through his 1983 flop *Stroker Ace*. At least not anymore there isn't, if it happens to air on TNT. Midway through the film, Burt gets Loni Anderson's character drunk to the point where she passes out on her bed, and wanting her to be comfortable while she dozes, he understandably strips her down. Director Hal Needham, in his finest directorial flourish, gives us an eyeful of Loni's mighty brassiere-busting bosom ... *cropped out on TNT*. Why deny movie fans this masterful shot? After all, this is as close as we ever came to seeing Jennifer from *WKRP* naked, and to take that away from us is *wrong*.

The same thing was done just a week before with *Hidden Obsession*, starring Heather Thomas and Jan Michael Vincent. During a torrid love scene, Jan rips off Heather's sweater (but without telekinesis), with the actress modestly protected by her bra. Unless you saw it on TNT, whereby you didn't see it at all.

Barbara Eden's Maidenform moment also found itself rudely yanked out of *Harper Valley PTA* when that film was shown this winter on The Family Channel. One might argue, "Hey, c'mon, it's The *Family* Channel," until one considers what they did leave in ... namely, the line about "killing gooks" in 'Nam. I'd bet parents would rather explain to kids why Jeannie wasn't wearing a shirt instead of having to answer, "Mommy, what's a gook?"

So what's next, evil censors? The only good part of *Teen Wolf*? The middle third of *Under the Rainbow*?

Conan + Hercules + my wife's drool = *Kull the Conqueror*.
By the way, here's a dumb joke my brother made up:
What flavor of ice cream did Baskin-Robbins create as a tie-in with *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*? Kevin Sorbet.

That said, I couldn't wait for Gellar's boyfriend, Ryan Phillipe, to die, partly because his character is such an insufferable asshole, and partly because I was jealous.

There is something about *I Know*'s fishing town setting that lowered my enjoyment of the film, probably because I'm used to relating to the suburban terrors of the genre than wharves and scallops. Its shocks make up for a lot of that, and it plays the audience like a violin, most effectively in the ending, which I think will go down as a classic in horror history.

History that likely will be occupied by the likes of *Scream 2*, Williamson and Wes Craven's in-record-time follow-up to the original monster hit. Although not quite as good as its predecessor, *Scream 2* is great fun that plays the audience like a violin. From the clever movie-within-a-movie opening, we know that Williamson's now-patented self-depreciation is in full force.

Neve Campbell returns as Sidney, the not-quite-victim of the murderous Ghostface. Now in college, she gets the heebie-jeebies all over again when a copycat killer starts slaughtering coeds, including *I Know* vixen Gellar. To say anything more would give away too much. Just don't miss the iron bar through the cop's head.

Kull the Conqueror
(1997)
MCA/Universal Home Video

★★☆☆☆

You can buy certain kinds of greeting cards that have nothing written in them. This is not something you can tell from the outside, because they're just as appealing and picture-perfect at first glance. It's not until you open them up that you come to the realization that they're blank, and still charming, but ultimately, there's nothing to them. So is TV *Hercules* Kevin Sorbo – the man's got presence, but lacks much in the expression department. Still, when you're hired to swing a sword in what would have been the DeLaurentiis' third *Conan* movie had Ahnuld not become such a big star, such qualifications fit the bill.

As sweaty, codpieced Kull, Sorbo becomes a king when he kills the current figurehead, only he wasn't supposed to, so the guy who thought he would be king plots revenge, which comes in the form of a 2,000-year-old, red-haired demon bitch Tia Carrere, who tricks Kull into making her his queen. After a celebratory hump, trouble ensues. Helping Kull defeat her evil ways are a seriously miscast Harvey Fierstein as a medieval gay man, saucy Karina Lombard as a member of the royal concubine and the Indian in the Cupboard. Together, they have a fight on a pirate ship and visit an ice cave.

So what makes this different from any given *Hercules* episode? Fewer CGI monsters – one, to be exact: a snarling devil whom Kull French-kisses. Don't ask.

Stephen King's Thinner
(1996)
Republic Pictures Home Video

★★☆☆☆

Based on one of Stephen King's worst books, *Thinner* is nearly among the worst King film adaptations. Ill-fated *RoboCop* Robert Burke stars as a very tubby lawyer who gets a blow job from his wife on the way home from dinner, which causes him not to see the decrepit old gypsy woman crossing the road, whom he kills with his station wagon of doom. Understandably upset, the gypsy

woman's equally wrinkly father puts a curse on the walking lard farm, which causes him to lose weight continuously, until he's nothing more than skin and bones.

We don't really care much about Burke's plight, though, because he's presented at first as a cartoon, and it doesn't help that he has to say stupid lines like, "I know as much about that as I do turbine engines." Tom Holland ploddingly directs from a tired Michael McDowell screenplay that has a cherry pie figure in to the non-climactic climax.

Following the film is a short documentary about *The Art of Special Effects Makeup*, only slightly more interesting than *Thinner* itself.

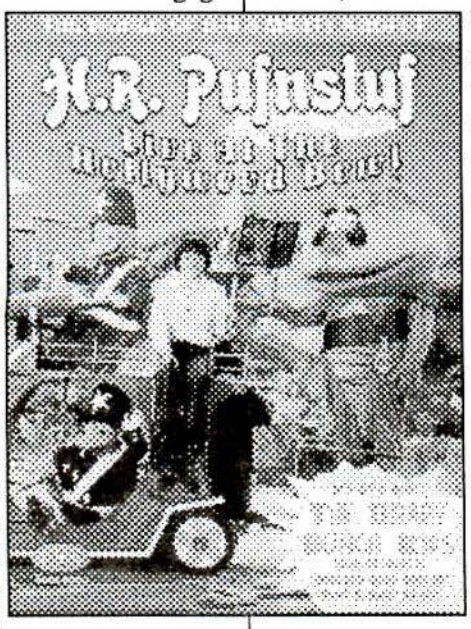
H.R. Pufnstuf
Live at the Hollywood Bowl
(1973)
Rhino Home Video

★★★★★

Forget *Woodstock*. Screw *Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll*. For the ultimate concert-film trip, look no further than *H.R. Pufnstuf Live at the Hollywood Bowl*, an early '70s, hour-long special that was likely the result of Sid & Marty Krofft's wildest weekend weedfest. To further prove that point, the show begins with a slapsticky mime routine featuring midgets in painter's outfits.

Performing to a sparsely populated Bowl crowd, red-afroed Johnny Whitaker comes out to sing "Friends," the theme to his *Sigmund and the Sea Monster* show. As he croons to the canned music, we see brief glimpses of unamused kids in the crowd. During the instrumental break, little Johnny rushes into the audience to offer handshakes to any takers; no one exactly clamors for this once-in-a-lifetime chance. Following the song, Johnny tells a weak joke about a worm.

How exactly *do* you follow a worm gag? You send out the Brady Bunch Kids for a rousing rendition of "Proud Mary" that would have John Fogerty deny his own songwriting credit. All six of the Brady kids are here in glimmering outfits, but Barry Williams was clearly old enough to know better. Bobby then introduces the orchestra before spontaneously breaking out into "Whole Lotta Shakin'," which segues into a medley of tired '50s hits, including "Johnny B. Goode" and "Rock Around the Clock."



Frighteningly pixieish mop-haired Brit Jack Wild hops a'stage to perform a number with the famed yellow dragon Pufnstuf, but the creature is nowhere to be found. Finally, he appears in the crowd, and is met with an enthusiastic uproar of excitement equivalent to O.J. Simpson showing up at a National Organization for Women conference.

Pufnstuf nemesis Witchiepoo just wants to *dance*, man, but she's so fucking ugly that no one will waltz with her. Thus, she creates a Frankenstein monster to have a partner. During the surgical process, she jokes about eating his intestines and hits an avian sidekick over the head with a sharp saw, eliciting many young laughs. When he comes to life, Frankenstein shakes his booty and then staggers out into the audience to frighten the tots. *Yes!*

But it's nowhere near as frightening as Wild performing "Consider Yourself," from the musical *Oliver!* Wild skips and jumps as if he were eight again, which he's clearly not, so one has to wonder how many hits he had to take backstage to get himself to the proper point where he just couldn't care any more.

This artifact is available for sale as a budget-priced tape, but for a few dollars more, you can – and should – get the deluxe set, which also includes a CD of the concert, so you can annoy friends and family members even more.

Event Horizon
(1997)
Paramount Home Video

★★★☆☆

One of last summer's costliest box-office bombs, *Event Horizon* treads that fine line between horror and sci-fi, never sure on which side it wants to fall. The title refers to an exploratory spaceship that disappears. Led by Sam Neill and Laurence Fishburne, a team of astronauts are sent on a rescue mission to retrieve the ship and its crew.

Once aboard the Event Horizon – quiet and lifeless – various crew members begin to experience bizarre and disturbing hallucinations. Neill keeps running into the ghost of his dead girlfriend (sans eyeballs), while Kathleen Quinlan spots her young son with rotting legs. What's it all about? The ship is haunted, you see, which is a story I'm all for until the twist in the final third, at which point the film degenerates into a preposterous turd.

Though underwritten, the film is generally quite stunning visually, except for several murky and underlit sequences. It may be space, but hey, let's shed some light. Music is provided by the mismatched team of Michael Kamen and electronica artists Orbital, while *Mortal Kombat*'s Paul Anderson handles the directing chores with visible skill.

Vegas Vacation
(1997)
Warner Home Video

★★★☆☆

Slight but sleek, *Vegas Vacation* is the fourth Griswold family travelogue in 14 years, and the only one *not* to carry the *National Lampoon* name. And when the *Lampoon* chooses not to attach its name to a product, that can be a very bad sign, considering the recent projects they *did* endorse, i.e. *Last Resort* and *Senior Trip*.

In a plot you could guess simply from the title and a knowledge of the previous *Vacations*, Chevy Chase and fam take a trip to Sin City, where they meet up with Cousin Eddie (Randy Quaid) and hijinks ensue. Greasy femme Wayne Newton tries to sabotage Chevy's marriage to Beverly D'Angelo, who looks her top-heavy best here.

The most mysterious thing about this *Vacation* is not why John Hughes chose to have nothing to do with it, but why the Griswolds have *yet another* whole new set of kids.

Kiss the Girls
(1997)
Paramount Home Video

★★★☆☆

With Morgan Freeman as its star, one might expect *Kiss the Girls* to be another *Seven*. It's not, but it is a workmanlike serial-killer thriller that entertains, even if it doesn't fully engage. The slightly masculine Ashley Judd is the only escapee among a handful of comely coeds who have disappeared into the underground lair of an unknown, twisted kidnapper-cum-collector, and she aids Freeman in hunting down the culprit.

I won't give away the culprit's identity, but I had it guessed well before a third of the film had unspooled. The method in which Freeman discovers it, however, is one of the least believable in film history; a guy this smart wouldn't be that stupid. *Kiss the Girls*

Starship: We built this shitty.

isn't that intelligent, but it doesn't embarrass. On a scale on one to *Seven*, it gets a four.

Starship Troopers
(1997)
Columbia/Tri-Star Home Video

★☆☆☆☆

Like the next guy, I'm up for seeing people battling giant bugs. Unfortunately, in the case of Paul Verhoeven's megabudgeted *Starship Troopers*, the insect battles amount to maybe 20 minutes of a flick that crosses the two-hour mark. The bulk of the blandness is taken up by a sudsy story of an impossibly good-looking high school graduate in a love triangle with two comely classmates, all of whom join the war against the space spiders.

These battle scenes impress, but are all too brief, which makes *Troopers* (terrible title, by the way) come up far short. Call it *Johnny Space Teen 90210*. Just don't call it good.

Pet Sematary
(1989)
Paramount Home Video

★★★☆☆

Pet Sematary II
(1992)
Paramount Home Video

★★★☆☆

Adapted by Stephen King from his own novel, *Pet Sematary* is surprisingly dark for a horror film aimed at the masses. But being dark doesn't necessarily translate into being great. Regardless, this film will forever be known as The One That Kills the Baby with a Mack Truck.

Dale Midkiff and Denise Crosby, both terrible actors, are a happy couple who have transplanted their kids to a remote farm house so Midkiff can take on a new job as a doctor at the local college. Their home sweet home sits beside a busy highway, where many dogs and cats are killed, prompting friendly neighbor Fred Gwynne to show them the "pet sematary," where household pets come back from the dead following burial.

When their own tabby croaks, Midkiff tests the legend, and sure enough, the pussy comes back, but meaner than ever. Never one to learn from his mistakes, he also tries it after his own son dies, and his wife, too. It's an intriguing premise that made a great read, and probably would have made a fine movie, too, were it in the hands of better actors and a more able director, which Mary Lambert is not. Despite a spinal meningitis subplot, *Pet Sematary* manages to be quite funny in its own bizarre way, like when a jogger's corpse helps Crosby rent a car.

The loose sequel allows for more of the same, albeit with a brand-new cast, headed by *T2*'s Edward Furlong, a newly motherless kid who goes to live with his veterinarian dad (Anthony Edwards, prepping for *ER*) in the same town where the original dead-pet carnage went down. Eddie learns about the cemetery's powers when his chubby friend finds his dog Zowie shot dead by his abusive sheriff stepdad (Clancy Brown). If you ask me, the kid deserves it just for naming a dog "Zowie."

Brown soon gets his, and comes back as a maniacal, belching zombie. Many others do, too, and their portraits are shown during the closing moments of the film, as if we're supposed to take a moment and reflect on those loves we have lost. Gimme a break. Lighter in tone than its predecessor, yet meaner, *Pet Sematary II* is junky cheese.

Assault on Devil's Island
(1997)
N/A

★☆☆☆☆

Evidently tired of repeating Billy Blanks films on end, Ted Turner's TNT network is now in the business of making its own "Nitro Original" action movies. First out of the gate is the steroid-laden *Assault on Devil's Island*, starring one Terry "Hulk" Hogan.

Never mind that "Terry" looks really terrible these days, as evidenced by the first scene, in which he goes through the motions of pretentious he-man posturings of some unnamed Asian martial art, throwing knives at cardboard cutouts in the dead of night. Never mind his sidekick is the aging Carl Weathers. Never mind that Billy Blanks has a supporting role. Mind only that Shannon Tweed is cast as the femme fatale, sporting an unbelievable Russian accent, and even though this is basic cable fare, they *still* find a way for her to take off her clothes in the first five minutes.

So, anyway, Mr. Nanny and Apollo Creed are part of a special forces team sent to rescue a team of gymnasts. *Gymnasts?* This is hysterical, laughable and near unwatchable. Santa with Muscles and Action Jackson don't exactly make for likable heroes. I still can't over the scene in which Suburban Commando punches a shark and shoves a bomb into his mouth. Boom.

Leprechaun 4: In Space
(1996)
Vidmark Entertainment

★★☆☆☆

Why set the latest installment of a tired horror series in the far reaches of outer space? Hey, if it worked for *Hellraiser*, it'll suit the *Leprechaun* just fine, right? Just don't ask for a reason, because it goes unexplained.

In the 1,000th *Alien* rip-off on record, *Leprechaun 4* pits a ragtag band of space Marines against the all-seeing, all-knowing, seemingly indestructible monster, here played by a squatty midget in bad makeup (*Willow*'s Warwick Davis). The little green guy has kidnapped an alien princess with gold glitter on her forehead, and the troops have been assigned the task to rescue her. They do so with ease, but the lep stows away on their ship to cause trouble, volley bad puns and do a Ricardo Montalaban impression.

Remember the *Alien* stomach-burst scene? *Leprechaun 4* attempts to go one better, with a penis-burst scene, as the Leprechaun emerges from a horny guy's erection. Of course, if *you* were making out with near-topless Tool Time girl Debbe Dunning, the same thing likely would happen to you, as luck o' the Irish would have a *lot* to do with your situation.

And things make even less sense as the flick drags on. There's the ship's resident albino cyborg genius (looking a lot like John Hurt in *Contact*), who rolls around on wheels and ends up mutated into a spider/scorpion (just like in *Aliens*!) after being injected with blue goo. There's the troops' leader, who flips out and dons drag to perform a musical number for no reason. Then there's the princess, who hands the guys a most unusual death sentence by opening her royal top.

Since the Leprechaun left Las Vegas in *Leprechaun 3*, things have grown tiresome. And if a space theme can't bail out your lack of ideas, nothing can. The imp blows up at the end after being sucked out of the airlock (that ol' trick?). One can only hope it's for good.

Child's Play 2
(1991)
MCA/Universal Home Video

★★★☆☆

Killer doll Chucky is back in a sequel that's directed more stylishly than the by-the-number script allows. Little Andy (Alex Vincent), fresh from torment from the original, continues to find himself haunted as the greedy corporate scum of the toy factory reassemble the satanic doll.

Now in foster care, Andy finds his surrogate parents killed by Chucky, as he does his teacher (soon after Chucky writes her a "Fuck You" note), yet no one believes the boy's claims that a doll is doing the bloodletting, except for fellow orphan Christine Elise, who aids Andy in the film's final colorful battle on the doll assembly line.

Child's Play 2 doesn't provide the twisted kicks of the first film, but it works well enough to merit constant attention. Chucky returned in *Child's Play 3* to raise hell at a military school.

Mortal Kombat Annihilation
(1997)
New Line Home Video

★★☆☆☆

In a town where few things are given, it is a Hollywood given that if a low-budget movie is released to low (if any) expectations and ends up surprising the hell out of everyone and taking home upwards of $70 million, there will be a sequel. It is also a given that most of the cast will return. So in the case of *Mortal Kombat*, when only two actors sign up for a second go-round, you can take that as a bad sign. And when even Christopher Lambert won't return, you should question everything.

Whereas the 1995 original had a story, a sense of humor and lots of kicking, the clumsily titled follow-up *Mortal Kombat Annihilation* has lots of kicking, not to mention wall-to-wall techno music to make up for the loss of plot and self-depreciation.

The filmmakers (new to the series, also not an omen in your favor) failed to come up with a script that makes any sense, even if we only asked for a little. They assume we already know the identities, personalities and backstories of every *MK* character, no matter how major or minor, from exposure to the video game. Evidently, the tots who sat behind me in the theater did, as they shouted the name of everyone upon their first screen appearance.

The Ren & Stimpy Show, Volume 1: The Classics
(1993)
Sony Wonder

★★★★☆

The first video release in a series of 11, *The Classics* showcases three vintage *Ren & Stimpy* cartoons, from the era before Nick took the reins from John K. It begins with "Stimpy's Invention," in which the blue-nosed fat cat dumps plans for his cheese-o-phone in favor of a "happy helmet," which makes the wearer – namely, Ren – in a constant state of bliss, until the song "Happy Happy Joy Joy" is played, however.

"Untamed World" parodies *Wild Kingdom* as our heroes take a look at nature, where every one of the freakish animals resembles either Ren or Stimpy. The anti-gravity, history-erasing "Space Madness" fills out the program, as do the shorts "Breakfast Tips" and the unforgettable "Log," which all kids love.

The Death of Ocean View Park
(1979)
N/A

★★☆☆☆

Suspense is rendered null and void in *The Death of the Ocean View Park*, and not only because the title says it all, but also because the end is shown at the beginning – total destruction of an oceanside amusement park. A roller coaster blowing up. Tilt-a-whirls on fire. Overpriced stuffed animals burned in effigy.

Scientologist Diana Canova, as aggressive a '70s dresser as anyone in this film, has dreams about the park coming to an end, so she thinks she's got supernatural powers. Meanwhile, park operator Mike Connors starts noticing weird, spooky things going on – from bumper cars driving on their own to sandcastles disappearing. Greedy park owner Martin Landau just doesn't care; to hell with safety, he takes a madcap ride on the coaster at an unsafe speed just for the heck of it. A pigtailed Marc Winningham spins the cotton candy, while former *Benson* aide Caroline McWilliams is the object of Connors' desire.

The best scene has a quartet of kids break in to the park overnight for a ride on some whirligig, only it won't stop and it spins around very fast. No vomit is projected, however. Not long after, a ruptured gas line causes the park to go kablooey, and Landau, attempting a ferris-wheel rescue, falls headfirst to the cement below.

He's about the only one to die in this strange, yet painful, quasi-disaster film. For some reason, it was made by *Playboy*, yet there's nary a tit in sight.

subUrbia
(1997)
Warner Home Video

★☆☆☆☆

Richard Linklater has made exactly one truly great movie – *Dazed and Confused* – and now one truly bad one. Based upon Eric Bogosian's (*Talk Radio*) play, *subUrbia* wastes nearly two hours of your life portraying the dope-fueled, lazy-bodied antics of a bunch of post-high school losers whose job it is to loiter in the parking lot of the local convenience store.

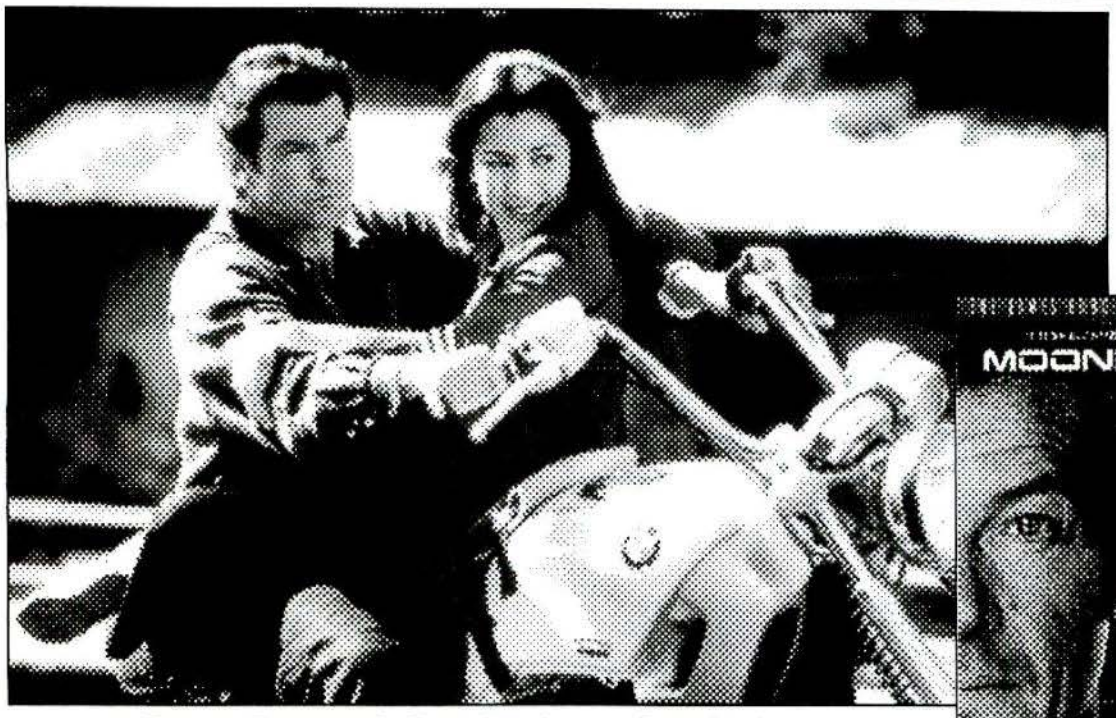
Dazed had a similar focus, but told its loose story with class and humor; these guys are merely lumps on logs. This may be the most repellent cast of characters since *Triumph of the Will*. When the only likable character (the Pakistani store owner) is made out to be some kind of villain, either I'm desperately out of touch or the Linklater/Bogosian team is. I vote them.

Castle Freak
(1993)
Paramount Home Video

★★★☆☆

Director Stuart Gordon must have hoped lightning strikes *thrice* by reuniting his *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond* stars Jeffrey Combs and Barbara Crampton for another Band-financed horror show. *Castle Freak* pits Combs, his estranged wife Crampton and their blind, blossoming daughter against a deformed, mongoloid beast that has been living in the bowels of a castle for years. It's not until Combs & Co. move in, however, that he manages to break free of his chains, stroke the girl's face as she sleeps and bite the breast of a local prostitute.

Gordon certainly has the creepiness down cold – the climactic chase is notably effective



Pierce Brosnan's Bond ... James Bond takes Michelle Yeoh for a ride in *Tomorrow Never Dies*.

– but *Castle Freak* lacks the stylized humor that made his previous efforts so successful. What it *does* have, however, is a surprisingly emotional last scene that shows Gordon's real skills as a filmmaker.

Moonraker
(1979)
MGM/UA Home Video
★★★★☆

Tomorrow Never Dies
(1997)
MGM/UA Home Video
★★★★★

Essentially, *Moonraker* is James Bond doing *Star Wars*, or at least MGM's attempt to cash in on the then-phenomenal space-movie craze. Don't miss, for example, the in-joke nod to *Close Encounters* (and you can't, because it's replayed a number of times). I remember being bored silly by this as a kid, because it seemed like it took them *forever* to get to space.

And it does. But the years of maturity have allowed me to enjoy everything leading up to the galactic shoot-out – namely, all the hot sex. Seriously, though, during the super-spy's bid to retrieve a hijacked space shuttle, we get Bond trapped in an astronaut testing unit, Bond fighting in the back of an ambulance and Bond squaring off against Jaws (Richard Kiel, having survived *The Spy Who Loved Me*) atop a cable car.

Lois Chiles is intelligent *and* delicious as Dr. Holly Goodhead, one of the most attractive Bond girls among the whole series. Although I don't buy Jaws' sudden switch to become Bond's ally at the end, *Moonraker* is a thoroughly enjoyable installment in the long series.

But it doesn't hold a candle to *Tomorrow Never Dies*, the latest Bond film that not only surpasses Pierce Brosnan's first 007 effort *GoldenEye*, but may be one of the three or four best Bond films ever. It's so action-packed that your interest is never allowed to wane. This is surprising, given that his adversary this time out is a media mogul, for God's sake, but as played by Jonathan Pryce, he's every bit as vicious and despised as a Drax or Blofeld.

The script is funny and clever, but what really sets this one above the others, though, is Bond's relationship with *Supercop*'s Michelle Yeoh, an Asian spy who proves to be every bit a worthy partner in his globetrotting missions. Neither window-dressing nor woman-in-peril, Yeoh holds her own against Brosnan. Of the numerous set pieces – which include an underwater dive and a parking garage chase – the one in which our handcuffed heroes escape a helicopter full of baddies while straddling a motorcycle remains the best.

Should the next Bond film or two continue to reach similar heights, the 007 franchise should last at least another decade.

Mac and Me
(1988)
Orion Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

Imagine *E.T.* with a politically correct handicapped kid in place of Henry Thomas. Now add in Ronald McDonald, and you have the inexorable *Mac and Me*, which represents Hollywood kid output at its vile worst.

A tiny, cute alien is stranded in America, whereupon he shacks up with a white family, headed by a frazzled single mom (Christine Ebersole). His attempts to make friends with the boy in the wheelchair are thwarted at first when the kid sucks him up with the vacuum cleaner, after luring him with Coca-Cola (as opposed to Reese's Pieces, which would have been just *too* obvious). Later, in a fiery grocery-store explosion, the kid nearly dies until the alien's mystical voodoo powers heal him.

But none of that matters. The *only* reason you need to see *Mac and Me* is for its notorious musical number at a McDonald's restaurant. At first an innocent kids' birthday party, the place erupts into a veritable episode of *Dance Fever*, with tykes, football players, cheerleaders, break-dancers and even the employees start rockin' out to the funky beats for no discernible reason, and in perfect choreographed fashion. The squatty alien, dressed as teddy bear, gets into the action by hopping atop the counter and bustin' out some phat moves.

Even Ronald McDonald (playing himself, as the credits note) ain't immune to the rhythm. I've never seen so much activity at a McDonald's, not even on a McDonald's commercial.

Space Jam
(1996)
Warner Home Video
★★★☆☆

Any big-budget film starring a basketball player is not something I'm going to pay for, especially when you can buy lunchboxes and Underoos for it, too. But for all that it has going against it (Michael Jordan, Michael Jordan, *Seinfeld*'s Wayne Knight, Michael Jordan and a rap music soundtrack), *Space Jam* is actually pretty decent.

In a nutshell, Jordan is kidnapped by Bugs Bunny and his Looney Tunes crew to play a game of b-ball against some nasty aliens. In an uncredited extended cameo, Bill Murray blows them all of the screen. The mix of live action and animation is near-seamless.

Snip the schmaltzy beginning and end, and you have a mildly funny, sometimes subversive and sexually suggestive kids' movie that has enough innuendo to please the parents. The butt-kissing hero worship of Jordan is just *sickening*. However, I find it interesting that a man of Jordan's power would allow his character to salivate over a racist dinner of "chicken and collard greens" as he does early in the movie. Try explaining *that one* to Lil' Johnny.

MouseHunt
(1997)
MCA/Universal Home Video

★★★☆☆

Being the first comedy from Spielberg's DreamWorks (not counting Clooney's *The Peacemaker*), you would think *MouseHunt* would be one of those pukey, Amblinized family-friendly films like *Harry and the Hendersons* or *The Land Before Time*. I'm happy to report, however, that *MouseHunt* is much too dark to be lumped in with those lumps of crap.

Brothers Nathan Lane and Lee Evans inherit a house from their string-magnate father that has the potential to sell for millions. Complicating their renovations is its lone resident: a mouse. But not an ordinary mouse. This one's a crafty trickster. This mouse kicks ass. His CGI-aided antics are the real drawing power, though they ultimately become secondary to other, less interesting plot points. A twisted screenplay – complete with flying cadavers – by Adam Rifkin (*The Dark Backward*) helps, as does Christopher Walken's brief turn as a psycho exterminator who eats mouse droppings.

Comparisons to *Home Alone* are unfair because: a) this film is *meant* to be bleak; b) Joe Pesci wasn't gay; and c) I didn't want to kill the mouse.

Coneheads
(1993)
Paramount Home Video

★★★★☆

In the wake of *Wayne's World*, it seemed that every *Saturday Night Live* character was getting their own movie. When I heard Lorne Michaels was reaching all the way back to '75 to immortalize the Coneheads on film, I feared the worst. Essentially a one-joke sketch, the Coneheads' joke wasn't all that funny to begin with.

Surprise. *Coneheads*, the movie, has lots of jokes, and many of them hit dead-on. Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtin bring nothing new to their roles as the outer-space couple, leaving the supporting cast to help carry the film. When said cast includes Chris Farley, David Spade, Michael McKean and a slew of *SNL* and sitcom vets (Jan Hooks, perhaps most notably), the job is done with ease.

As daughter Connie Conehead (*Dazed and Confused*'s Michelle Burke) attempts a normal high-school life, Aykroyd and Curtin find themselves fingered by the feds as the illegal aliens that they are. The film makes great use of what the sketches never could use – namely, special effects, particularly in a sequence on the Coneheads' home planet. *Coneheads* tanked, but it was far more cohesive than *Wayne's World 2* or *It's Pat: The Movie*, the other *SNL* films around the time.

Guyver 2: Dark Hero
(1994)
New Line Home Video

★★☆☆☆

A steep step down from the comic-book sensibilities of 1991's *The Guyver*, *Guyver 2* retains few of the original's four-color flourishes and none of its style, fun or cast. This time, the college kid with the ability to turn into an armor-plated superhero via two bulging holes in the back of his neck hangs out at an archeological dig that uncovers an alien ship. Upon this discovery, he also learns that the researchers doing the digging can shape-shift into a variety of sinewy, scaly monsters.

Rubber-suited fight scenes ensue, all on the weak level of the *Power Rangers* TV show, for which *G2* director Steve Wang also can be held responsible. The grainy stock on which this flick is shot gives it a made-for-television look that works against any epic ambitions the production may have had. And at over two hours long, they're *really* pushing it.

Clue
(1985)
Paramount Home Video

★★★☆☆

Turning a beloved board game into a movie isn't a stroke of genius, but Jonathan Lynn and John Landis tried anyway. The results are pretty much what you'd imagine: seven grown men and women running around a spooky house, screaming and falling down (Chris Farley would have been *perfect* for this).

Tim Curry is the butler who invites six Washington D.C.ites over for dinner on a night that turns into murder and blackmail. Filling the roles of Col. Mustard, Prof. Plum and the like are Eileen Brennan, Christopher Lloyd, Martin Mull, Michael McKean, Madeline Kahn and Leslie Ann Warren, who is H-O-T. The always-welcome Colleen Camp is the bosomy maid who figures into the deadly plot, which is pretty hard to follow, even on a third viewing.

Clue's gimmick when it was released (and promptly bombed) in theaters was that it had three different endings, each at a different venue. I saw ending "C" at the now-defunct Westpark Mall. I can't imagine anyone paying to see all three, because the first 85 minutes are nothing I'd want to sit through in the span of its short run. *Clue* ventures toward slapstick and near-vaudeville, producing little that is funny, but strangely emerges mildly entertaining nonetheless. I think it would work better as a play than a movie. Some detest *Clue* with a passion, including **HITCH** reviewer Louis Fowler ("What's next?" he asked. "*Connect Four: The Motion Picture*?"), but then again, he also said *Star Wars* was among the three worst films of all-time.

A Very Brady Sequel
(1996)
Paramount Home Video

★★★☆☆

With *The Brady Bunch Movie* a box-

Austin Powers: These boobs were made for flauntin'.

office success, a sequel was inevitable. Whereas the first was a sharp parody, *A Very Brady Sequel* is a vastly inferior follow-up. The blame can be shouldered solely on the scriptwriters (all four of them) and the director, none of which were connected to the first film.

The Brady cast does return, however, and they give it their likable all, with Gary Cole's Mike and Christine Taylor's Marcia as eerie and dead-on as ever. *Animal House*'s Tim Matheson poses as Carol's first, presumed-deceased husband in order to get his greasy mitts on a valuable family heirloom. This plot, never a part of the series, is weak. When it takes the clan to Hawaii in the final third, we hope for a send-up of the infamous tiki-and-tarantula-ridden episodes, but it never materializes.

Entertaining enough but never great, *Brady* boasts another round of in-joke cameos, from RuPaul and Richard Belzer to David Spade and Barbara Eden, all decked out in her *I Dream of Jeannie* garb. Matheson's drug-induced animation sequence seems out of place, but the kids' two musical numbers suit the flick just fine.

Austin Powers:
International Man of Mystery
(1997)
New Line Home Video

★★★★★

Spy spoofs typically fall flat on their faces (*Casino Royale* being the prime example), but Mike Myers' *Austin Powers* is a hysterical, enjoyable riot, thanks mostly to the creation of the title character, a horny, dentally challenged '60s swinger on her majesty's secret service.

Thawed from his cryogenic tank to thwart the world-domination plans of his old nemesis Dr. Evil (also Myers), Austin finds difficulty adjusting to a life without promiscuous sex, acid trips and vinyl records. Acting as his partner is leggy Elizabeth Hurley, who is disgusted by his loose behavior, yet finds him strangely charming at the same time.

Every cinematic spy from James Bond to Matt Helm gets skewered by the smartly stupid script, peppered with effective cameos by Robert Wagner, Carrie Fisher, Tom Arnold and Mimi Rogers, who looks positively smashing in an *Avengers*esque outfit, baby. The opening credit sequence is a winner, propelled by Quincy Jones' "Soul Bossa Nova," only one instance of this film's continuous use of using music the correct way, as opposed to mere background to sell records. A Vegas scene in which Myers and Hurley are serenaded by Burt Bacharach is another.

The DVD release includes two alternate (and rightly shelved) endings, as well as other deleted scenes, one of which (featuring *Moonraker*'s Lois Chiles as the steamrolled henchman's widow) should have made final cut.

An American Werewolf in Paris
(1997)
Hollywood Pictures Home Video

★☆☆☆☆

A 15-years-too-late sequel to a film that wasn't exactly crying out for one, Anthony Waller's *An American Werewolf in Paris* makes John Landis' *An American Werewolf in London* look like Shakespeare. Not only is it devoid of the patented Landis wit, there's nary a scare in sight.

Tom Everett Scott (*That Thing You Do!*) is a nice American boy who bungee-jumps off the Eiffel Tower to save suicidal Julie Delpy. Somehow cheating the rules of gravity, he does, and falls in love. She's a werewolf, though, and he gets bit, becoming a werewolf himself. This lame-brain flick's biggest fuck-up in a sea of fuck-ups is having an underground punk club *full* of werewolves, so it might as well be called *The Howling, Part Set*.

Unlike the Oscar-winning creatures created by Rick Baker for *London*, *Paris* relies on

Tom Everett Scott and Julie Delpy frantically search for a way out of their contracts in *An American Werewolf in Paris*.

CGI monsters. So they look cheap and unconvincing. And oh, yeah ... they don't look like werewolves, either, but rather dogs with Down's Syndrome. Perhaps realizing this, Waller oft employs the werewolf-cam to give us their POV so he doesn't have to call attention to the crappy effects as much.

Even without the slapstick antics, cartoony sound-effects and Skinny Puppy on the soundtrack, I would have hated this. The audience I saw it with seemed to be in agreement; the only scene they responded positively to entailed our protagonist blowing bubbles with a condom – a scene stolen from, of all things, *Coneheads*, which would be an apt term to coin for Waller and his crew.

The Man Who Wasn't There
(1983)
Paramount Home Video

★☆☆☆☆

'Tis easy to see why the early-'80s resurgence in 3-D films (*Jaws 3-D*, *Amityville 3-D*, *Comin' at Ya!*, *Spacehunter*, et al.) was over and done with so soon: Because the movies were shit, and *The Man Who Wasn't There* is among the worst.

Slap-happy Steve Guttenberg is a Washington D.C. aide who, en route to his own wedding, stumbles upon an invisibility formula. What were the studio heads at Paramount thinking when they thought *invisibility* and *3-D* went together? Poorly, poorly directed, the film throws a few knives toward the camera to compensate.

Watch as Steve downs some and we see heart-patterned boxers run across the screen! Laugh as stereotypes of every foreign nation are presented and humiliated! Thrill as an invisible Steve enters a girls' shower and soaps up some honeys! Or *don't*. And I'd recommend that option.

Shaft
(1971)
MGM/UA Home Video

★★★★☆

In the blaxploitation film to end all blaxploitation films, *Shaft* begins with an ultra-cool cinematic punch: Shots of star Richard Roundtree walking the streets of New York City in his leather overcoat, oblivious to traffic, with the Issac Hayes soundtrack blaring.

Private dick/sex machine John Shaft is hired by a Harlem gangster who goes by the name of Bumpy to bring back his daughter, who has been kidnapped by the mob. Shaft accepts, and the urban adventure kicks into action, even though we all know a gangster named "Bumpy" would never survive five minutes in Harlem.

To help him locate the missing girl, Shaft recruits several brothers, and they all plan an assault that involves machine guns, fire hoses and Shaft swinging in through a window, but not before a great scene in which he poses as a bartender to fool a couple of bad whiteys. Roundtree begins and ends the film with a good, hearty laugh.

Barbarella
(1968)
Paramount Home Video

★★★★☆

Ted Turner is a lucky man. As evidenced in the opening of the camp classic *Barbarella*, Jane Fonda can strip naked in zero gravity. And in this French-comic adaptation, the queen of the galaxy endures numerous adventures in the far-out reaches of outer space with *and* without clothing.

In search of the missing American astronaut Duran Duran, Barbarella encounters a series of whacked-out space nuts, from giggling kids who unleash their killer dolls to a blind angel played by John Philip Law (who had things *much* cooler in his own Dino-backed, Euro-strip flick, *Danger: Diabolik*).

Barbarella is trippy fun, though highly disjointed. Interest in the flimsy plot all but gives way before the final third. Luckily, it senses this, and director Roger Vadim keeps things moving at a zippy pace. The theme song rules.

It should be noted that to show her appreciation to the various people who aid her along her mission, she screws them. In fact, Hanoi Jane bangs three guys within the span of an hour (doing the last guy so fierce that her hair curls). If I ever see Ms. Fonda stranded on the road with a flat tire, I'll be sure to give her a ride so that she can give me one, too.

Primitive Love
(1964)
Something Weird Video

★★★★☆

It's mondo movie time, sex-kitten-style, as the poor man's Marilyn Monroe (Jayne Mansfield) serves up a projector's worth of animal sacrifices and topless natives to an interested professor. She's been conducting a study on the primitive lust of man around the world, and has loads of documentary footage. Meanwhile, two sex-crazed bellhops (the *very* poor man's Jerry Lewis impersonators Franco Francho and Ciccio Ingrassia) want to give Jayne room service.

Among the footage taken by Jayne: a pig is shown being slaughtered, screaming included; roosters befitted with leg knives engage in a cockfight; a post-makeout cha-cha by the lake; and a woman is punished for adultery by letting a python sink its fangs into her face, while another is pelted with eggs.

As Jayne and the professor watch the film, the bellhops peek through the keyhole and go through their crazy pratfall antics. They even imagine Jayne as a belly dancer and a Hawaiian hula girl. To prove her point that men are essentially animals, Jayne strips for the bellhops while the professor hides, watching from the closet. The more retarded bellhop of the two is running around like an orangutan by the time Jayne has unhooked her

bra, but it's the professor who's undergone the ultimate transformation, as he becomes a snarling werewolf.

Jayne and her breasts look sexy in their various stages of undress, even despite the serious back-of-the-leg cheese. More Jayne would have helped quicken the pace of this movie, even at its brief length. The later *Wild, Wild World of Jayne Mansfield* is better.

Duel
(1971)
MCA/Universal Home Video

★★★★★

Hard to believe that one of the most imitated films in recent history was made-for-TV, but it is, and on top of that, it was the directorial debut of one Steven Spielberg. Dennis Weaver stars as a mild-mannered businessman who, while trying to make an appointment, passes a dirty semi on the highway. This pisses off the truck driver, who, for the rest of the film, intimidates and endangers Weaver with a series of twisted chases and games. These cat-and-mouse scenarios are played out not only on the open road, but also at a diner, a couple of gas stations and a shoulder with a broken-down school bus full of children.

Suspenseful and effective, *Duel* is brilliant storytelling, thanks to Richard Matheson's screenplay and the director. Whoever this kid is, he's got talent. *Duel*'s marks can be found on everything from *The Car* and *Wheels of Terror* to *Roadgames* and the recent *Breakdown*, as well as other flicks that don't even come close.

The Punisher
(1989)
LIVE Home Video

★★★★★

Marvel Comics' celebrated anti-hero kicks ass in live action in a cool, dark and stylish action film that *should* have been released theatrically. Even though Dolph Lundgren's Punisher is missing the skull costume of the comics, he's got the brooding, take-no-prisoners attitude down pat.

Years ago, Frank Castle (Lundgren) was a cop, until *his* family was killed by a mob-placed car bomb. Since then, he's been living underground in the sewers, emerging in the shadows to rid the Big Apple of its Mafia scum. The Punisher finds himself embroiled in the middle of a gangster war as he rescues a horde of kidnapped mob kids from the clutches of a sinister Asian criminal. Slumming Oscar winner Louis Gossett Jr. is Castle's ex-partner who has spent the past five years searching for The Punisher.

T2 editor Mark Goldblatt makes his directorial debut with *The Punisher*, and does a damn fine job, especially with a nighttime pier shoot-out, Castle's opening mob hit and the climactic bust on the Asian gang's HQ, all performed with nifty comic-book flourishes. The pulpy title sequence sets the right tone, and *The Punisher* moves as if it only had 15 minutes to tell its story.

All of Marvel's movies have been derided (and rightfully so) for one reason or another, but mostly because they can't get a "real" one off the ground. (Mr. Cameron, *please* get off your ass and make *Spider-Man* so I can go see it five times.) *The Punisher* is among the best of Marvel's small lot.

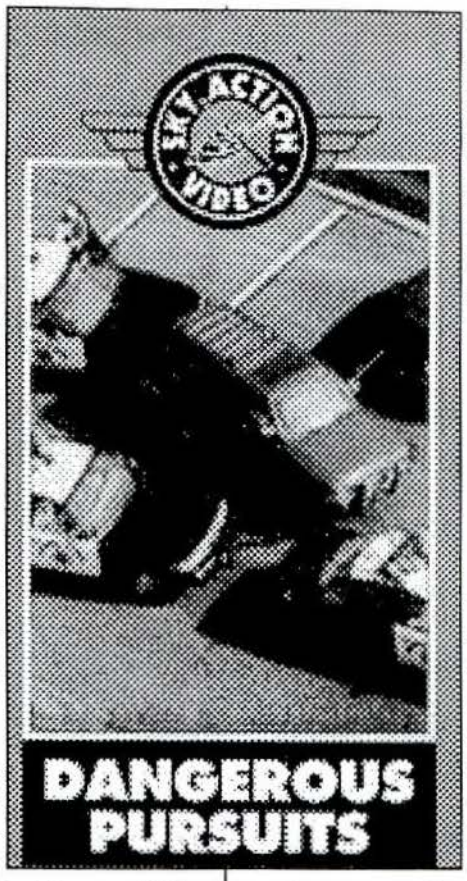
Bikini Hoe-Down
(1997)
N/A

★☆☆☆☆

From the makers of *The Bikini Carwash Company* (aka The Film That Started It All, At Least for Films with the Word "Bikini" in the Title) comes perhaps the worst *Bikini* flick yet: *Bikini Hoe-Down*.

Three trashy swimsuit models who are named – *get this* – April, May and June find themselves embroiled in an all-out moonshine war when their car breaks down in the Deep South. Befriended by local yokel Griffin Drew (whose breasts are the most sculpted among all eight on display), the gals learn how to do it farm-style – in the hay, in an outdoor bath – heck, they even take conjugal showers in a three-walled shack! To help raise much-needed funds for the ailing farm, the chicks hold a "bikini hoe-down" (hence the title) in which they strip and shake their surgery buckets. Having the word "hoe" appear in the name of this flick is quite telling, really.

Even with the faux-*Dukes of Hazzard* voice-over, a subplot involving a hippie pothead and the obligatory old-man character named Pappy, *Bikini Hoe-Down* ain't gonna hold nobody's int'rest, ya hear? I don't think the producers could have picked four more repulsive, anti-sexy ladies (to use the term lightly) to star in this cheapie.



Dangerous Pursuits
(1996)
MVP Home Entertainment

★★★★☆

A reality shockumentary with a title more attuned for an erotic thriller, *Dangerous Pursuits* is a compendium of high-speed traffic chases, as seen from the watchful eye of a camera-equipped helicopter flying high over the streets of L.A.

A motorcyclist ends his 120-mph run by hitting the side of a bus. A tank rams RVs on a residential street. A man steals a bus. Most of these scenarios have been seen before, albeit in an abbreviated format, on FOX's triumphant troika of *World's Scariest Police Chases* specials – a fact that both works for and against this program.

Unlike the slam-bang editing treatment they get on FOX, these chases are shown more or less from beginning to end, which heightens the suspense and gives you more of the story. On the other hand, some of them are painfully drawn out, especially with the copter pilot's sports-like attempt at play-by-play narration ("Northbound! Northbound! He's making a right turn! Ooh, he narrowly missed a pedestrian!"), and you get a lot fewer chases as a result.

Omega Doom
(1996)
N/A

★☆☆☆☆

Honestly, I *tried* to watch *Omega Doom*, another one of those straight-to-video-oblivion, post-apocalyptic science-fiction flicks in which humans are outnumbered by bloodthirsty cyborgs. Like many, this one also stars Rutger Hauer. But when I saw the onscreen credit, "A Film by Albert Pyun," I knew the journey would be a difficult one, for hack-for-hire Pyun is responsible for some real, unwatchable dogs – among them, *Nemesis*, *Dollman* and *Alien from L.A.*, with the latter only worth watching when it is parodied on *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

Hauer, a robotic actor, plays a robot bent

on killing man until he's zapped by some ray-gun and turns good. Erotic-thriller queen (at least among the muscular disease set) Shannon Whirry is also in it, but she doesn't don skin, so why bother?

Shocker
(1989)
MCA/Universal Home Video

★★☆☆☆

The only *Shocker* here is why this film ever got greenlighted. Wes Craven's tale of a serial killer who travels through the TV is silly and far from frightening. Wes should be kissing Kevin Williamson's feet right now, because without Kev's *Scream*, Wes would still be cranking out tired exercises like this and *The People Under the Stairs*. Since Wes wrote *and* directed, he has no one to blame but himself.

Mitch Pileggi (now of *The X-Files*) is Horace Pinker, a bald electricity freak who murders families by invading their home via the boob tube. Young football hunk Peter Berg's family is killed by Horace, as is his blonde girlfriend, the can't-act Cami Cooper. Horace is electrocuted for his crimes, but it doesn't phase him. More grisly murders occur, and we could care less.

Berg foils the bad guy at the end by zapping him with a remote control, which is beyond ridiculous. *Shocker* comes off like a *Nightmare on Elm Street* retread; obviously, Wes forgot that the numerous *Elm Street* sequels did that, too. *Elm Street* honey Heather Langenkamp and jar-headed New Ager John Tesh appear in cameos. Heather is killed; Tesh is not – there is definitely *something* wrong with this picture.

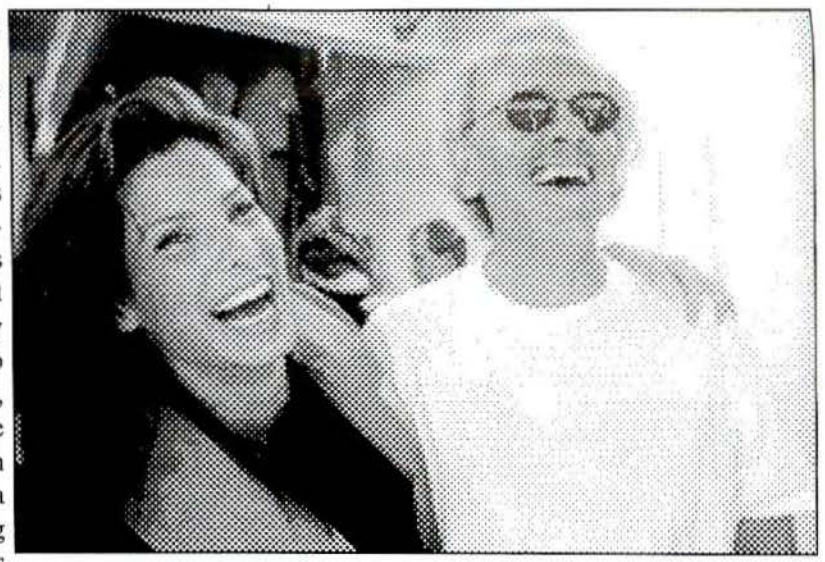
Disturbed
(1990)
LIVE Home Video

★★★☆☆

Malcolm McDowell as a nutball? Who'd buy that? Yet here he is again, the former droog playing another headcase. In *Disturbed*, he's a doctor heading up a sanitarium. Ten years earlier, he tied up a comely female patient, drugged her and raped her – an experience that drove her to suicide. Now, her daughter (Pamela Gidley) – who witnessed Mom's demise – has become a patient herself.

It's not long before Dr. Malc tries to molest the little missus, too, only he mistakenly injects her with penicillin, to which she is allergic, and slips into a coma and dies. Hiding the death, McDowell becomes paranoid the next day when her body disappears. That paranoia only increases when he begins spotting her in the unlikeliest of places (i.e. a tree, the bottom of a pond), her face ghost-white. She also sends him a singing telegram to thank him for raping her.

It all ends atop the sanitarium when Gidley forces McDowell to jump, and his fall is broken by a well-placed parachute. It's all a game, see? Just like *The Game*! Silly but sick enough to merit a viewing, *Disturbed*'s best scene is a sequence in which McDowell dreams a naked Gidley visiting his bed one night. As she writhes on top of him and he feels her up, he soon notices that *she has no head!*



Speed 2's Sandra Bullock and Jan de Bont doing what nobody who saw their film did: having fun.

Speed 2: Cruise Control
(1997)
Fox Video

★☆☆☆☆

When it comes to event movies, I can be pretty forgiving (see last issue's three-star review of *Batman & Robin*, for instance). But *Speed 2: Cruise Control* is two hours of grave injustices. Whereas 1994's original *Speed* was smart and relentless (and one of my favorite action movies ever), this sequel that never should have been made is stupid and plodding. *Spud 2: Snooze Patrol* would have been more apt a title.

Keanuless, Sandra Bullock is back as Annie, and the big joke here is that she flunks her driving test. *Ha! Get it?* Her new man is Alex (Jason Patric), an LAPD SWAT team member who invites her on a Caribbean cruise in order to propose to her. Scary Willem Dafoe, who places leeches on his chest, provides a mild diversion when he sabotages the ship with golf-ball bombs and sulfur smoke. A needless, PC subplot involving a deaf girl tries to distract you from realizing that the action scenes are boring. I mean, *just how fast can a luxury liner go?*

Director Jan de Bont must have known lightning wasn't going to strike twice once they started filming, as he seems to employ the "let me shake the camera" technique far too often. Bullock is dim-bulb whiny; Patric a sleepy simp. The two have no chemistry together ... or separately. The supporting cast is wasted, including Colleen Camp, Lois Chiles and Glenn Plummer, who reprises his role as the funny black guy who loses an expensive material possession. Not of it works; all of it is insulting. (Note: The back of the video box claims *Speed 2* was rated PG-13 for "frenetic disaster action." Whatever.)

Pamela and Tommy Lee's Home Videos
(1997)
bootleg

★★★★★

So what did you do for *your* birthday? If you're a former Playmate and current bimbo like Pamela Anderson Lee, you let your tattooed-rocker hubby Tommy Lee tape the entire day with a video camera, however ill-advised. And how they spend the 40-odd minutes on this day (or days) is the gotta-have boot of the year.

Oh, it starts off innocently enough, with Tommy surprising Pam, who's taking a bubble bath and acting all shy for the camera. Budding director Tommy lets us see what it's like when he takes a drag on a cig from his POV. Then there's a couple of idle minutes spent lazily on the set of Pam's box-office bomb *Barb Wire*. And then Tommy surprises Pam by renting a yacht. After showering her with gifts, Pam takes the camera from Tommy and pulls out his willy to give it a playful tug. From the looks of it, I don't see how she was able to do so without using both hands.

On the yacht, the two sunbathe nude, allowing us to see that much of Tommy's upper leg is tattooed. "I lost my dick!" Tommy exclaims, tucking his member between his legs, a move swiped notably from the transsexual killer in *Silence of the Lambs*, and the most intelligent sentence uttered by Mr. Lee during the entire sexcapade.

At some point, the happy couple is driving down the California freeway, and Pam and Tommy are joined in the front seat by another

passenger wanting attention: Tommy's cock. Pam leans over and consoles it for a little while, although the dimensions of the human mouth are not conducive to such a thing. "I get this for the rest of my life!" she beams. Tommy complains that he's so fucking horny, he's pulling over at the next bridge for a little of the whammy-Pammy. The bridge never comes, but Tommy's *just gotta*, so they make do with the mere shoulder of the highway and make it quick in the backseat. "The camera's still on!" Pamela says. *Camera schamera, bitch! Tommy wants Mommy!*

The dramatic climax of this slice of *cinema verite* follows this unseen hump (and subsequent discarding of Pam's moist panties out the window), as a smiling Tommy gets back in the driver's seat and takes off, smiling and giddy, as Soul Asylum's "Misery" blares on the car stereo. Never has the camera seen such a happy man, and never has music been married to visuals so well ... at least not since Scorsese.

Back on another boat, Tommy's steering the watercraft with his feet before he gets the bright idea to use his dick instead. Just to make sure it's all smooth sailing ahead, Tommy's tom-tom gives the horn a little honk! Pam brags, "He's got the biggest fucking dick and big balls, too!" Then Pam smiles big for the camera, only she doesn't use her mouth. This scene gives us a glimpse into Pam's precise, exacting shaving habits, and it gets Tommy so worked up that they've gotta do it right then, right there, *right now*. Pam takes hold of the camera for the next couple of minutes as Tommy gives Pam more than what a woman of her size is built to handle. We are so *right there* with them that for most of the hum's duration, we only get to see the "H" on Tommy's "MAYHEM" tummy tattoo.

The newlyweds take it inside for some more f'n's, all incredibly more graphic than the scene prior. They go at it a few times back to back – interspersed with Pam's flute-playing, bringing a whole new meaning to the phrase "Tool Time" – all culminating in Tommy ejaculating for the camera. He seems pretty proud of it, and you know, he should be. Let's put it this way: Tommy's so big that when he saw the end of *Boogie Nights*, he probably laughed and said, "You call *that* a penis?"

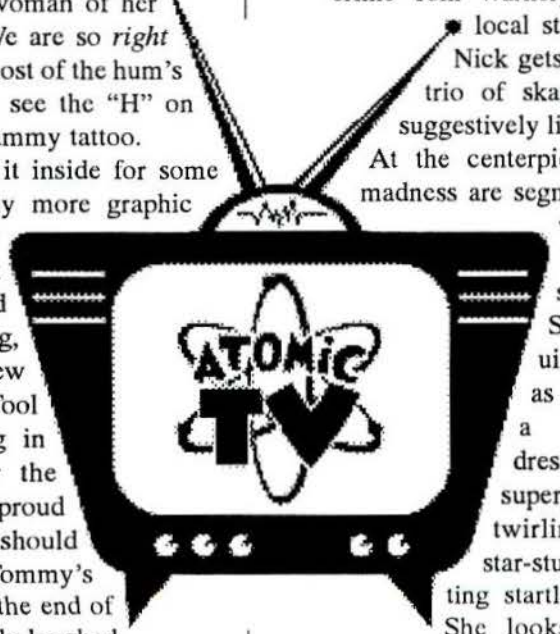
This wild adventure ends with Pam rolling a fatty after she and Tommy work on their cookbook of foods you can make with marijuana. This is Pam's finest screen role – honest, revealing and all over the place. Tommy's just Tommy: He smokes and puts the word "fuck" into every sentence. Both act just like children, albeit children on drugs and with elephant testicles. It's sick, it's grotesque, but again, I ask you: So what did you do on *your* birthday?

Atomic TV Holiday Special
(1997)
Atomic Books
★★★★★

Atomic TV: Volume 1
(1997)
Atomic Books
★★★★☆

From the bowels of Baltimore emerges *Atomic TV*, shameless self-promotion in the guise of public-access hell. And it rules! A loose mishmash of cribbed footage, live music and material culled from all reaches of the realm of the bizarre, the show shakes up the cathode tube so hard, I don't know how it ever saw air.

The *Holiday Special* is a good starting point, assembling a variety of retro Christmas cartoons and clips before settling into more subversive territory, with James Brown's "Santa Goes Straight to the Ghetto" playing over aftermath scenes of the L.A. riots of '92. In the "plot" framing the fun, Atomic Books owner Scott Huffines dons beard as Kris Kringle. Santa visits the bookstore (a home to **HITCH** since day one, by the way) for a cold Bud and performances by two garage bands (one named Garage Sale) that, to my total surprise, don't suck at all! Following the musical entertainment, Santa and his elf (partner-in-crime Tom Warner) venture off to a local strip club, where St. Nick gets a lapdance from a trio of skanky strippers who suggestively lick candy canes.



At the centerpiece of the festive madness are segments of one of the worst parades I've ever seen – one swarming with Shriners and a genuine headcase known as "Underdog Lady," a grown woman dressed like the cartoon superpup, prancing and twirling around in her star-studded cape and getting startled by loud noises. She looks remarkably like Woody Harrelson's landlady in *Kingpin*, and the camera catches her off-duty, yelling at children (*"GET LOST!"*) and chatting about hot dogs with cafe waitress Stella Gambino, on whom I now have a serious crush, mostly because she looks like Sarah Michelle Gellar in 15 years. The episode ends with a hilarious *Dragnet* clip, followed by a hungover Santa spreading Christmas cheer all over the toilet seat. .

Volume 1 is comprised of "The Grape Ape Episode" and "The Jim Rose Circus Sideshow Episode." The former wins aching belly laughs with the vintage educational short *14 & Under*, in which two siblings cooking their parents breakfast in bed watch Mom and Dad going at it, which they mistake for wrestling, and "poor Mommy's losing."

"He's sticking it into her pee hole!" cries one.

"No, he's not! He's pushing it into her poo-poo!" exclaims the other.

Later, at the table, the folks learn the kids were watching, as the youngest tells Dad that Mom said "you were a stallion." Mom panics, asking if they saw everything, to which the oldest replies, "Yes, when Daddy put his wiggly into your poo-poo." Slaps all around.

This episode also includes music videos from Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and the Put-Outs; trailers for *Superchick* and *Caged Women*; and a funky soul tune played over footage of kids getting checked for scoliosis.

The "Sideshow" episode is slightly weaker, with most of its running time devoted to the razor-swallowing, nipple-stretching, sumo-wrestling, condom-inhaling, glass-rubbing, dart-throwing antics of the infamous Jim Rose Circus. An entirely disturbing cartoon – a love song about a pickle – follows, as does a scene from *Beat Girl* and the end credits read (painfully slow) by a local stripper.

Replayed about 20 times – but never wearing out its welcome – is a clip from a *Godzilla* sequel of a young Japanese boy exclaiming (dubbed), "Bang! That's wild!" You betcha, lil' Ichiro.

Joe's Apartment
(1996)
Warner Home Video
★★★☆☆

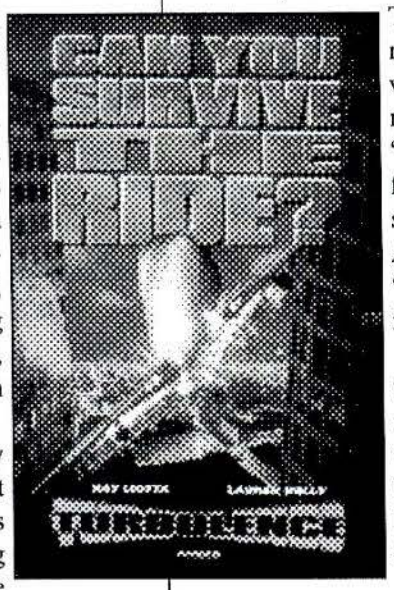
MTV's first feature film pits lunkheaded Iowan Jerry O'Connell against thousands of cockroaches that live in his rundown, rent-controlled NYC digs. Because this is a flick from MTV, the insects talk and sing and dance. Also because this is a flick from MTV, it doesn't last longer than 80 some-odd minutes. You've got a weak story with quick editing, nifty special effects and a zippy (albeit senseless) pace. In other words, everything you've come to expect from MTV.

Never before in the history of cinema, however, has someone been named responsible for "Roach Songs" in an opening credits sequence. Perky Megan Ward lightens things up whenever she appears onscreen as Joe's love interest. Robert Vaughn appears briefly as her lingerie-wearing senator father, and Hawaiian oddity Don Ho is a gangster. The roaches steal the show.

Turbulence
(1997)
HBO Home Video

★★★☆☆

Another entry in the "if *Twister* hit it big, why can't we?" sweepstakes, *Turbulence* combines the charismatic serial killer plot with the oft-played plane-outta-control scenario. Ray Liotta (surprise) is the bad guy, among one of less than a dozen passengers on a Christmas Eve flight (yeah, right!) on a jumbo jet. After the federal marshals are quickly disposed of, Liotta terrorizes the crew, setting his sights on stew Lauren Holly, who is fiercely unattractive with her Peter Pan hairdo here.



Holly must stay alive! Holly must outwit ol' Ray! Holly must land the plane! After ridiculous footage of the plane flying upside down, Holly crashes the liner through a parking garage and Japanese karaoke bar before finally touching down. Liotta sings "Buffalo Girls" from *It's a Wonderful Life*, so that you know he's whacked. Hector Elizondo has a supporting role, so you know that you can laugh at the film freely.

Incredible Paris Incident
(1967)
Something Weird Video

★★★★☆

A lot like the two *Superargo* films, *Incredible Paris Incident* is yet another Italian superhero movie in which a millionaire playboy also doubles as a caped crusader (Argoman) in his spare time. Since he doesn't don tights until halfway into the film, the viewer must be entertained by the carefree bachelor antics of our protagonist, Sir Reginald Hoover.

And it'd be hard *not* to! In his idea of foreplay, Reg challenges a comely female visitor to a quick game of archery. If she hits her designated target, *he'll* give her a car. If she doesn't, however ... well, it's bedtime, baby! (You mean all these years, that's *all* I had to do?) This being a swinging spy film, betcha can guess the outcome. His predilection for delicious dames actually turns out to be our hero's downfall, too, as he can't use any of his superpowers (sensitive hearing and telekinesis among them) for six hours after 'gasm. Which is too bad, as it's a gas watching him will a bus crash just by thinking about it.

Knee-deep into a flimsy plot about a stolen diamond, Argoman finally bursts into action. "Don't count on it, dear lady," he tells his curvy nemesis. "I will annihilate you!" The villainess has tied a nightied love to a table, where she is about to be molested by a clunky robot. "Not a pleasant fate to suffer at the hands of a robot," she comments, to which Argoman angrily replies, "Your instincts are diabolic!"

A bit slow starting out, there's plenty of four-color nuttiness in the second half to merit viewing. With the bargain gadgets and bachelor-pad beat, this *Incident* is incredible.

Prey of the Jaguar
(1996)
N/A

★★★★☆

Covert-operative-turned-family-man Maxwell Caulfield leads the good life. He's long shunned busting drug cartels in favor of menial construction work, spending time with his dorky family and harvesting quite the porn-star mustache. But when a criminal he helped put behind bars makes a prison break and slaughters his family in payback, ol' Max again must turn to kickin' villain booty.

The style in which he does so, however, sets this film apart from all the rest. Rather than becoming your standard, STV revenge thriller, Caulfield consults an Oriental kung-fu master (is there any other kind?) for training, purchases a crossbow and dart guns and dons a homemade costume to become a superhero named The Jaguar. Hobbling along in plastic and smeared face paint, he looks like a Ninja Turtle costumed by TG&Y. Sharing a trait with Caulfield's *Grease 2* character, Jaguar's also a cool rider, as he scouts about town on a sleek black motorcycle, even though this film doesn't have the budget to fill it with gas so we can see it move.

Caulfield gives a classic bad-acting performance as the unwitting (yet comfortably quick-quipping) crimefighter. When he tells his *Remo Williams*-esque mentor his fam has been slaughtered, he hugs a punching bag as he collapses into unconvincing sobs. Then there's the matter of the hard-to-swallow dialogue, too, like when Jag confronts his nemesis' henchman:

Jaguar: "You tell Banderas he better pray, because he is!"

Henchie: "Is what?"

Jaguar: "Prey!"

Prey of the Jaguar trots out all the clichés; among them, the enemy who makes a bullseye in darts just as he vows to kill the hero and the inevitable good-guy-saved-when-bad-guy-gets-shot-in-the-back-by-surprise-supporting-character climax. It also trots out the inexplicable, like a ponytailed Stacy Keach cameo or an ultra-secret government spy agency running its reports on a dot-matrix printer.

In the hands of hack director David DeCoteau (*Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-a-Rama*, or whatever it's called), *Prey* cannot be taken seriously, not even when it offs the wife and kid. The setup and credit sequence scream "syndicated TV-movie," and Max jumping around onscreen (subbed in part by obvious stunt doubles with longer hair) like it's Halloween is the nail in the credibility coffin. Following other B-level heroes from *Black Scorpion* to *The Demolitionist*, this *Jaguar* is another fun example of why superhero movies can't be made without a $50 million budget.

Terror Train
(1980)
Fox Video

★★★★☆

As if the American public needed another reason to despise the modern-day fraternity system, *Terror Train* offers another: A pledge goes bonkers after his brothers' prank of having him get in bed with a corpse goes awry. Three years later, the mental case crashes the frat's final party as the costumed students board a big ol' spooky train for some locomotive lovin'.

Jamie Lee Curtis, then the screen's reigning scream queen, is the only one sympathetic to the wayward pledge's plight, but she's still one of his targets. First assuming a Groucho Marx mask – in an image that disturbed me when I first saw this as a child – the killer stalks his prey freely from car to car, and then donning the costume of whomever he kills, with Hart Bochner being one of that elite group.

Ben Johnson is the kindly conductor who first discovers the murders, while David Copperfield plays a fop, femme, nerdy magician – in short, himself. With nicely claustrophobic setting and a neat twist at the end, *Terror Train* overcomes many of its standard horror trappings.

The Nurse
(1997)
A-Pix Home Video

★★☆☆☆

As one of the more insipid revenge thrillers to see the light of day in recent years, *The Nurse* is about as engaging as its vanilla-bean title.

Billy Zane's ugly sister Lisa is a nurse – in fact, *the* nurse – who weasles her way into taking care of her deceased pop's paralyzed boss. Her dad, you see, was embezzling until the big man caught him and ran his name through the mud, prompting one of those understandable murder-suicides, which in turn prompts the CEO to succumb to a stroke. Hey, it could happen, right? Zane goes around flirting with the old dude's son (John Stockwell), making the old dude suffer and sticking syringes into various supporting cast members.

Not that have an allergy to films involving sticking syringes into various supporting cast members; it's just that I don't buy her *motivation*. And, yes, even B-movies need motivation.

(above) "Look at these cool costumes our moms made us!" (below) Green Lantern ropes in Miguel Ferrer's hopes that *Justice League of America* will result in a regular paycheck.

Justice League of America
(1997)
bootleg

★★★★★

Aquaman
(1985)
bootleg

★★★★★

In the mighty tradition of Roger Corman's *The Fantastic Four* – and by that we mean in the can but never to legally emerge – is *Justice League of America*, CBS' aborted, live-action attempt at a weekly series featuring many (okay, likely none) of the nation's most beloved superheroes.

With Superman and Batman off making multimillion-dollar blockbusters, this *Justice League* is largely comprised of Green Lantern, The Atom and The Flash. When he's not making goofy umbrellas, chainsaws and helicopter blades with his magic ring, Green Lantern is trying to salvage his ailing relationship with a young hottie. The Atom is a pudgy science geek, whereas The Flash is a jobless loser, not to mention a clueless numbskull along the lines of *Friends*' Matt LeBlanc. Rather than talk shop at, say, a Hall of Justice, these guys loaf around in robes in a shared apartment and try to fix the TV so they can watch *Touched by an Angel*.

Joining them in their sporadic darings-do is the not-in-the-comics Fire. Like the in-the-comics Firestorm, Fire can shoot flames. However, Fire is just here to give the JLA a little diversity, as Fire is a black girl. She's also a struggling actress, trying to get cast as a banana in a fruit commercial, but ends up attracting the eye of an underage director instead. He wants to cook her a French omelet and take her to a musical. (And he's *not* gay?)

Fire and the guys occasionally do show up at the JLA's true hideout, an underwater structure overseen by Martian Manhunter, played here by a highly rotund David Odgen Stiers of TV's *M*A*S*H*. Among our heroes, Stiers is the only "name" in the cast, unless you count John Kassir as The Atom, as he voices the Cryptkeeper on *Tales from the Crypt*. (Didn't think so.)

As the pilot begins its ill-fated run, the city of New Metro is threatened by its first-ever hurricane, whipped up by the snarling evil of a mysterious figure known as The Weatherman, who wants $20 million to not level the city with a tidal wave. As we later learn (excepting the fact it's totally obvious

from the get-go), The Weatherman is actually the highly respected researcher Dr. Eno (*Twin Peaks*' Miguel Ferrer). Stumbling upon his lab late one night is his lowly but perky assistant Tori, who finds herself zapped by a freakish cloud of crude computer animation which gives her the power to freeze things.

Because of this incredible party trick, Tori is recruited by the JLA to join. She is given the superhero name of Ice, probably so subsequent episodes could be laden with numerous "Fire and Ice" jokes. It's a good thing she signs up, because who else could freeze the tidal wave once The Weatherman lets 'er rip? Yep, the plot is wound up that easily.

Watching *Justice League*, it's no surprise it's never going to do anything but gather dust on the Tiffany Network's shelves. It is a veritable two-course meal of corn and cheese. After ABC's pretty darn decent (and short-lived) *The Flash* series, it's pathetic to see that hero reduced to getting a job as a mailman so that many yuks can be elicited by the sight of him delivering letters at breakneck speed. We also see him eat food like there was no tomorrow, finished off with that sure-fire laff-getter, the hearty belch. Meanwhile, The Atom's heroics are pretty much reduced (no pun intended) to watching him shrink so he can get under a porch to free a cat. Oh, and he also gets small so he can enter a room undetected by an alarm laser, under which he limbos, as "Limbo Rock" plays on the soundtrack.

With all that said, I loved it! Directed by Lewis Teague (*Romancing the Stone*), the flick is at least made with technical competence, but maybe not so much that your attention is diverted away from the school-play costumes or the pun-heavy script. Obviously, the network execs believe it to be a load of shit, but I call it a load of fun, perching high on that scale of guilty pleasures. It's certainly better than the *Generation X* telefilm that actually aired on FOX, but its upcoming *Nick Fury* movie with David Hasselhoff may give *Justice League* a run for its money. Had it become a series, though, I – along with millions of others – would have tuned in faithfully week after week.

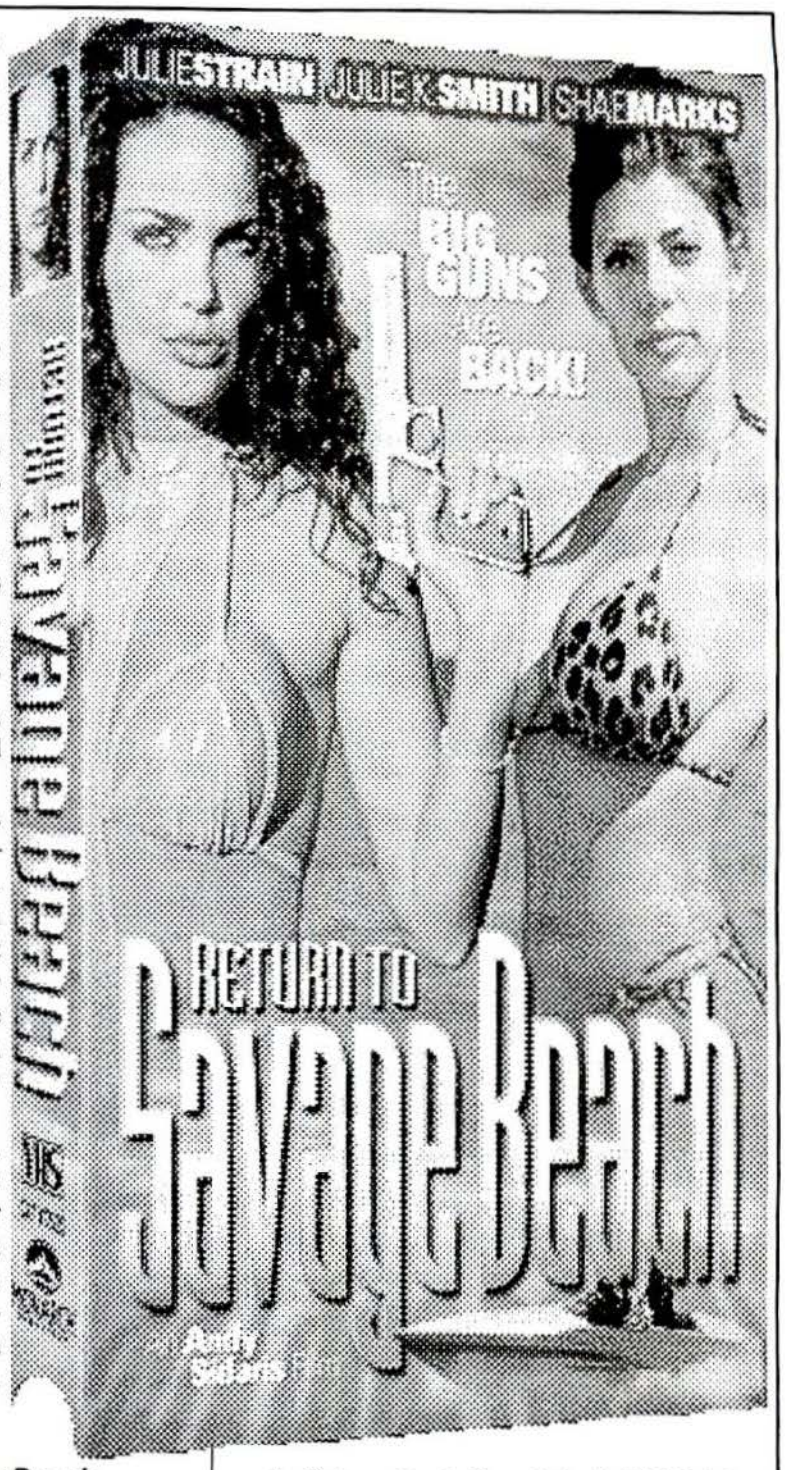
Another illegitimate pilot that the folks at DC Comics can't be too terribly pleased with is *Aquaman*. Strange deal, this *Aquaman*, as it doesn't resemble a true TV show as much as it does a student film, made by smart-ass collegians who I'm betting didn't have the rights to the character.

Beginning with the origin of Aquaman (but not the *real* origin, as Aquaman was *not* discovered by Jacques Costeau) told via unappealing stationery drawings, the show jumps to live action to show Aquaman's alter-ego at work as a sealife scientist. In the first of many moves that steer this show toward *Saturday Night Live* hokiness, the plain-clothed Aquaman talks to his waterborne friends by sticking his head into the aquarium and asking, "What's the score of the game?"

Then a colleague rushes in and changes the channel to a pirate broadcast by The Angler, a ski-masked villain who scales fish and has to eat a banana every half-hour so he doesn't "spaz out." Like *JLA*'s Weatherman, the similarly costumed Angler wants bucks, so Aquaman jumps into action, taking his trusty starfish Lefty with him. Running across two dolphins in the ocean, he says, "Mom, Dad ... I need you to take me to The Angler's hideout." Cut to scene of Aquaman surfing on the backs of said dolphins.

At The Angler's lair, Lefty attacks – yes, *attacks* – most of the henchmen. Aquaman lifts one of them by the balls. The action sort of ends there, presumably because the parents of the kids behind the Steadicam wouldn't give them any more money.

Silly beyond belief, *Aquaman* will make you wonder how its makers ever thought they had a chance in hell of getting real jobs out of it. Still, you put a well-known superhero onscreen big or small, and I'm hooked.



Return to Savage Beach
(1998)
Monarch Home Video

★★★★★

For reasons still unbeknowst to us, our review of Andy Sidaris' *Day of the Warrior* in **HITCH** 15 solicited more mail than any other flick we've ever reviewed. Was it the breasts, people?

It must be, because Andy keeps showing them and we keep watching them. Wasting precious little time since his triumphant return with *Warrior*, Sidaris is back with his latest babes/bikinis/bombs opus, *Return to Savage Beach*. By title alone, it sounds like a sequel to Andy's 1989 *Savage Beach*, even though it is billed as the second "L.E.T.H.A.L. Force Adventure," the first being *Warrior*, or course. No matter, as *every* Andy Sidaris movie is more or less a sequel to *any* Andy Sidaris movie.

In *Return*, the ladies of the L.E.T.H.A.L. (Legion to Ensure Total Harmony and Law) organization embark on a valiant yet somewhat lackadaisical search for buried treasure on a remote, uncharted island. So if it's "uncharted," why is it on their maps? It's a question never brought up, but I doubt any of the ladies could muster up the smarts to answer it. Julie Strain is Willow Black, the mastermind of the do-gooder and do-harder spy force, who wears frilly negligees. Bull-dyke Julie K. Smith is Cobra, the stripper-cum-agent whose nipples are always saying hello. Shae Marks' breasts also make a return, and the rest of her luscious self shows up, too, to play the role of agent Tiger. Assisting Cobra and Tiger are a couple of buff guys whose names I didn't catch (not that I tried), but suffice to say that Smith greets her partner by smashing her breasts around a stripper's pole without using her hands. Howdy!

The *Warrior* himself – wrestler Marcus

Bagwell – who went Navajo-nutzo and caused our dashing dames so much trouble in the last film, has turned good guy, presumably because they needed *someone* to cup Strain's sculpted bosom in the waterfall love scene. So this time 'round, the bane of our heroes' existence is Martinez, a slimy Mexican who wears a mask over half his face (*Phantom of the Opera*-style) to cover scars he received in an explosion caused in the original *Savage Beach* by former Sidaris honeys Dona Speir and Hope Marie Carlton.

Doing most of the dirty work for Martinez is Sidaris newcomer Carrie Westcott (like Marks, a former Playmate who got her chest done *after* her centerfold). Though not expected to be much of an actress, comely Carrie can't even pull off a brief scene as a pizza delivery girl on rollerblades. We won't even mention the semi-Russian accent that suddenly makes its entrance when the film is almost over.

Return is filled with the standard Sidaris action scenes – meaning planes, boats and remote-control cars will somehow figure in to them, perhaps all at the same time! However, this latest effort marks the first appearance of a submarine and Jet-Skis. The hysterical high point comes when Smith maneuvers an bomb-befitted RC racer up a ramp and into the trunk of a car filled with gasoline cans. Kablooey! Finishing a close second is the nightie-clad Strain's spar with a trio of ninjas.

Although not an action scene *per se*, it should be noted that when Marks and Smith finally discover the treasure worth supposed millions, they postpone digging it up in order to take a swim. Thus, we get a two-minute underwater topless romp. This could be condsidered gratuitous, were it not educational. You see, we learn that not only does a bag of silicone (or *four*, to be precise) *float*, but it attempts to *float away on its own*, as if trying to detach itself from the female breast in which it is encased. I never knew this before.

And while we're on that subject, I would be doing you a disservice not to mention that there are points in *Return* – thanks wholly to the double-barreled Marks' totally horizontal chest – where it appears that the film is in glorious 3-D. You have exactly four scenes in which to check this phenomenon out for yourself, not that I was counting or anything. But she rules. Andy, baby, keep 'em coming.

Maniac Cop
(1988)
Trans World Entertainment

★★★★☆

Perhaps the seminal wacko-man-in-uniform flick, *Maniac Cop* marks the intentionally junky and remarkable collaboration of Larry Cohen, William Lustig and a switchblade nightstick.

Some bonkers cop is killing off innocent citizens in the Big Apple. Good guy cop Bruce Campbell is suspected, but the bad man is actually a ex-con cop who has risen from the dead. He's pissed.

Tom Atkins and his overcoat ("Look at the size of those hematomas!") lead an all-star B-movie cast, including Richard Roundtree and ... well, that's about it.

Dark and dirty, *Maniac Cop* paved the way for its own two sequels, as promised by the final, he-ain't-dead-yet shot.

Dave Roever Presents: Exposing the Satanic Web
(1989)
Roever Communications

★★★★★

Ooh, boy, is Dave Roever one scary dude. Half his face blown apart by a phosphorus grenade, today he goes from school to school frightening small children (and more than likely exposing more than just the "satanic web").

Before the rocking theme song comes on, Dave tells us we are at war, and even though he doesn't want to be responsible if they are, he thinks young children should watch this video. As the theme song plays, images of that world-renowned satanist Sid Vicious are flashed, as well as good-ol' stanbys like Ozzy Osbourne and Metallica. The opening segment talk about Richard Ramirez and OKC's favorite son Sean Sellars. Like all impressionable teens, they were led to Satan through rock music, which leads to reading the satanic bible, candle magic and dressing like dirty hippies and high-school stoners.

The entire satanic rituals are covered in detail, so that if there are any budding teen devil worshippers watching, they can take notes and do it right. Exploitative as hell, you'll have a devil of a time watching this.

—LF

Cleopatra Jones
(1973)
Warner Home Video

★★★★☆

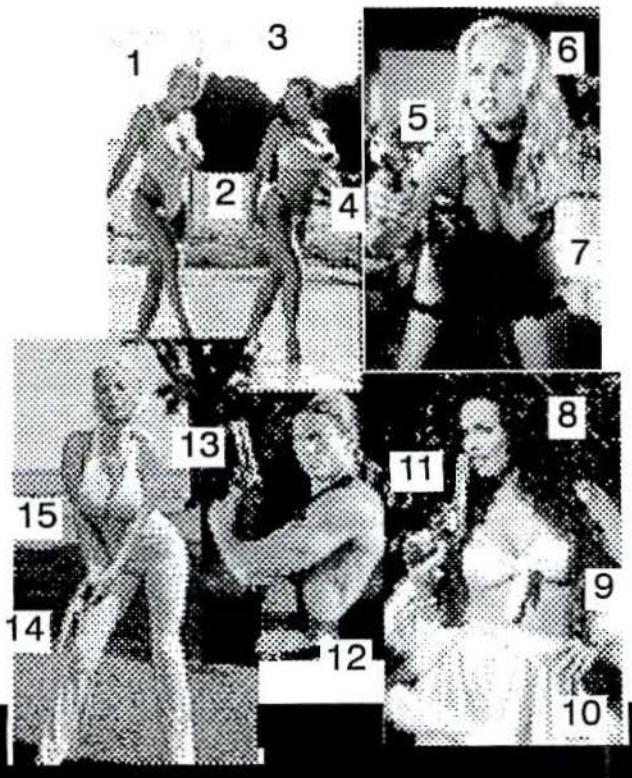
Tall-as-the-trees Tamara Dobson is Cleopatra Jones, a kung-fu-fightin', Corvette-drivin' special agent for the U.S. government, out to kick some major Shelley Winters booty to bust up an international drug ring.

Winters plays a lesbian crime lord to Dobson's high-heeled, high-afroed, high-kickin' fed. *Antonio Fargas plays* Doodlebug, one of Winters' many silly-named minions (like Fireplug and Pickle) who decides he's not man enough to take on Cleo, so Winters has him offed in a shootout. Another henchman meets his doom getting smashed in a junkyard incinerator.

Fast-paced and full of gunplay, soul music and poor grammar, this not-afraid-to-offend-honkies blaxploitation film is one

A Handy By-the-Numeros Viewer's Guide

The Savage World of Sidaris



1. Julie K. Smith
2. Fake boobs
3. Shae Marks
4. Fake boobs
5. Big gun
6. Carrie Westcott
7. Fake boobs
8. Julie Strain
9. Fake boobs
10. Acceptable spywear
11. Big gun
12. Some shirtless guy
13. Big gun
14. Big gun
15. Fake boobs

that will satisfy your *Jones*.

Star Kid
(1998)
Vidmark Entertainment

★★★★★

Although I had to leave halfway through, it's movies like *Star Kid* that make me wish I had kids of my own. I mean, *Santa with Muscles* was good, but not this good!

Star Kid takes everyone's fantasy of having a seven-foot cyberbuddy to the extreme. You see, new kid Spencer (*Jurassic Park*'s Joseph Mazello) is being hassled by a bully and his mom just died. Just before the boy ends it all, along comes "Cy," the aforementioned cyber-suit. Cy gives young Spence the courage to face his inner demons through violence and alien possession. The message was so heart-warming, I left to become a Big Brother at my local chapter of Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Give 'em a call and volunteer – but only after you see *Star Kid*! *–LF*

Deep Rising
(1998)
Hollywood Pictures Home Video

★★☆☆☆

More dumbass, would-be fright flicks like this, and the current horror resurgence will be dead once again. Essentially *Alien* set on *The Love Boat*, the monstrosity concerns an octopus-like creature running loose on a cruise ship.

Career-rehab Treat Williams and Famke Janssen (*GoldenEye*'s babe with the killer thighs) are among the ragtag team of idiots who go looking for the tentacled thing of CGI creation. When you finally do see it, you'll cry "Fake!"

Aside from a "Girl from Ipanema" joke, a scene in which a partially digested but still alive victim is vomited up and the part where the guy from *Amistad* gets an axe through the forehead (which I believe cost him an Oscar nomination), *Deep Rising* is shallow, run-o'-the-mill stuff, predictable at every turn.

Cobra
(1986)
Warner Home Video

★★★☆☆

As the much-maligned ad campaign went, if crime's the disease, he's the cure. Well, what else would you expect from a Stallone movie written by Stallone himself? When an egotist gets a shot like that, he's going to write himself a character nothing less than our Holy Saviour.

Sly is Lt. Cobretti (hey, clever!), a renegade cop who chews on a matchstick and drives a car with the license plate "AWSOM 50," because that's probably how Stallone believes "awesome" is spelled. His town – lit up all *Miami Vice*-like – is under siege by a cult of serial killers. When leggy model Brigitte Nielsen is marked for death, Cobra moves in to give her a little of the police protection. Though nothing great, *Cobra* is one of Stallone's most enjoyable movies. I especially like how he pauses before every line, as if struggling to recall his own words. Slick and directed with more flair (by George P. Cosmatos) than it should be allowed, *Cobra* is also ultra-violent, with many cast members meeting grisly deaths via sharp knives and hooks.

The creepy robot from *Star Kid* takes aim with his phallic weapon. I mean, just *look* at that thing!

Notably, this movie makes an concerted effort to date itself, what with John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band on the soundtrack, the Pepsi Free product placement and the prominently displayed photos of President Reagan, not to mention that photo shoot where Nielsen vamps amidst several robots.

Air Force One
(1997)
Columbia/Tri-Star Home Video

★★★☆☆

As President, Harrison Ford fights Russian terrorists aboard Air Force One. Intriguing though that may be, the film is not the action extravaganza you might think it to be. Although Ford does great as always in his nice-guy-who-kicks-ass role, it lacks the zippy punch of director Wolfgang Petersen's earlier *In the Line of Fire* or the literate soul of Ford's *The Fugitive*.

What is does have is Gary Oldman as the accented baddie, something we haven't seen him do for at least, what, three months? William H. Macy is drastically underused as one of Ford's staff. Though not bad at all, *Air Force One* has been done before – and more enjoyably – as the similar *Executive Decision*.

Rabid
(1976)
Cinecom Home Video

★★★☆☆

Just like how in every interview Stephen King does he talks about how horror can come from everday objects, David Cronenberg's theory that horror comes from within the body is just as popular. And sure, *Videodrome* had the VCR in James Woods' tummy, but all *Rabid* has is a big, penis-like thing coming out of Marilyn Chambers' underarm. If this is all the body is rebelling against, give me a possessed soda pop machine that kills softball coaches any day.

The doglike Chambers is in an accident, after which she receives a skin graft and comes out with a big penis under her arm. This is never explained, but I don't think it's covered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield. She needs blood, so she seduces people and the jimmy sucks blood from the person. This gives the person rabies. Hence, the title. From this point on, the film becomes a ripoff of George Romero's *The Crazies*, which also goes nowhere. *—LF*

All videos reviewed were done so by Rod Lott, except those marked with an "LF," which were reviewed by Louis Fowler.

Ryun Patterson's

HONG KONG EXPRESS

Love is in the air. Birds are singing, girls are swooning and kung fu, guns and liquor are everywhere. Welcome to love, Hong Kong style.

Hong Kong seems to be an ideal place for the fragile hummingbird which is love to grow, flourish and suck the nectar from numerous plant species. The kinetic pace of the city lends excitement where there is normally none, and Wong Kar Wai's ***Chungking Express*** (1994, Miramax Home Video) showcases this beautifully.

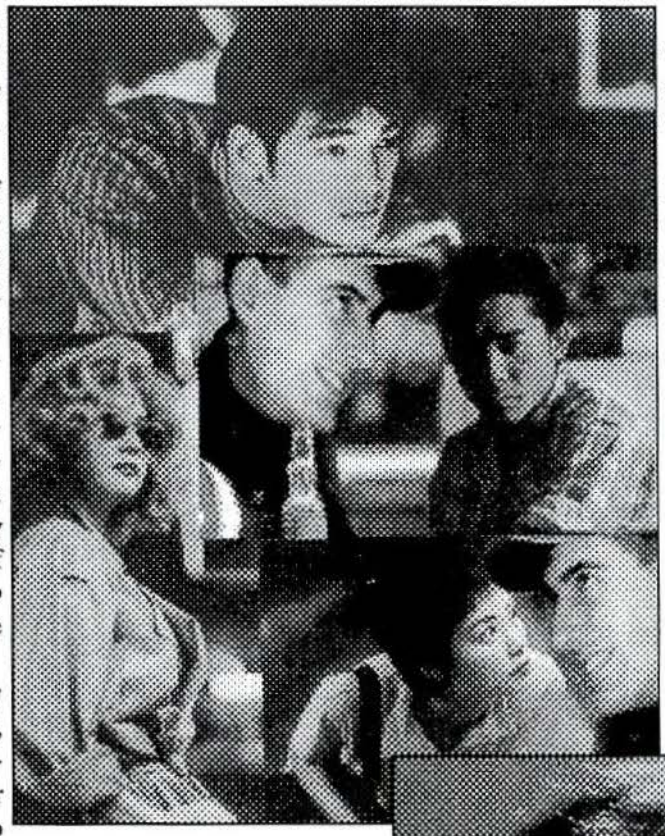
Released over here as part of Quentin Tarantino's Rolling Thunder banner, this is one of a few HK flicks you can get in the States with great picture, color, sound *and* subtitles. The downside to this is QT's commentary before and after the film. While he does paint a pretty good picture of the film's influences and history, his tremendous ego betrays him with such comments as "*Chungking Express* was originally made up of three different stories, much like *Pulp Fiction*." Blah blah blah. Get to the movie.

Chungking Express was originally made up of three different stories, much like *Pulp Fiction*, but was eventually pared down to an excellent pair of vignettes about a pair of cops who frequent a take-out restaurant in the middle of the city.

In the first tale, heartbroken cop Takeshi Kaneshiro falls for HK uber-babe and drug smuggler Brigitte Lin (in a blonde wig and sunglasses, no less) and learns there's lots of sexy fish in the sea. The photography is beautiful, with crowds buzzing around in slo-mo shots that go far in showing how disconnected people really are. Plus there's cool violence, great dialogue and some pop psychology thrown in as a bonus.

The second part features Tony Leung (*Hard-Boiled*) as a cop whose longing for love piques the interest of the restaurant's newest employee, played by HK pop superstar Faye Wong (also a magnificent babe). What follows is a rarity in the film world today: a plot development so fun and strange that nobody could ever guess what happens. Taken together, *Chungking Express* is a beautiful film that can actually make the most jaded person believe at least in the possibility of love in a fast-paced world.

The soundtrack CD is also pretty good. While it doesn't have the two English-language tunes from the movie on it, it does feature some great atmospheric background tunes (one titled "Fornicating in Space") and an ultra-cool version of the Cranberries' song "Dreams," sung in Cantonese by Wong herself, that's a hell of a lot better than the original. (Go to *www.hkpop.com* to order it for like $16.)



Judging from the title, a movie like ***Sex and Zen*** (1991, Tai Seng Video) would probably be thought of as having two main elements: sex and zen. You can't judge a book by its cover, however, and I learned this lesson all too well watching this "wild comedy" featuring the incredible assets of one Amy Yip.

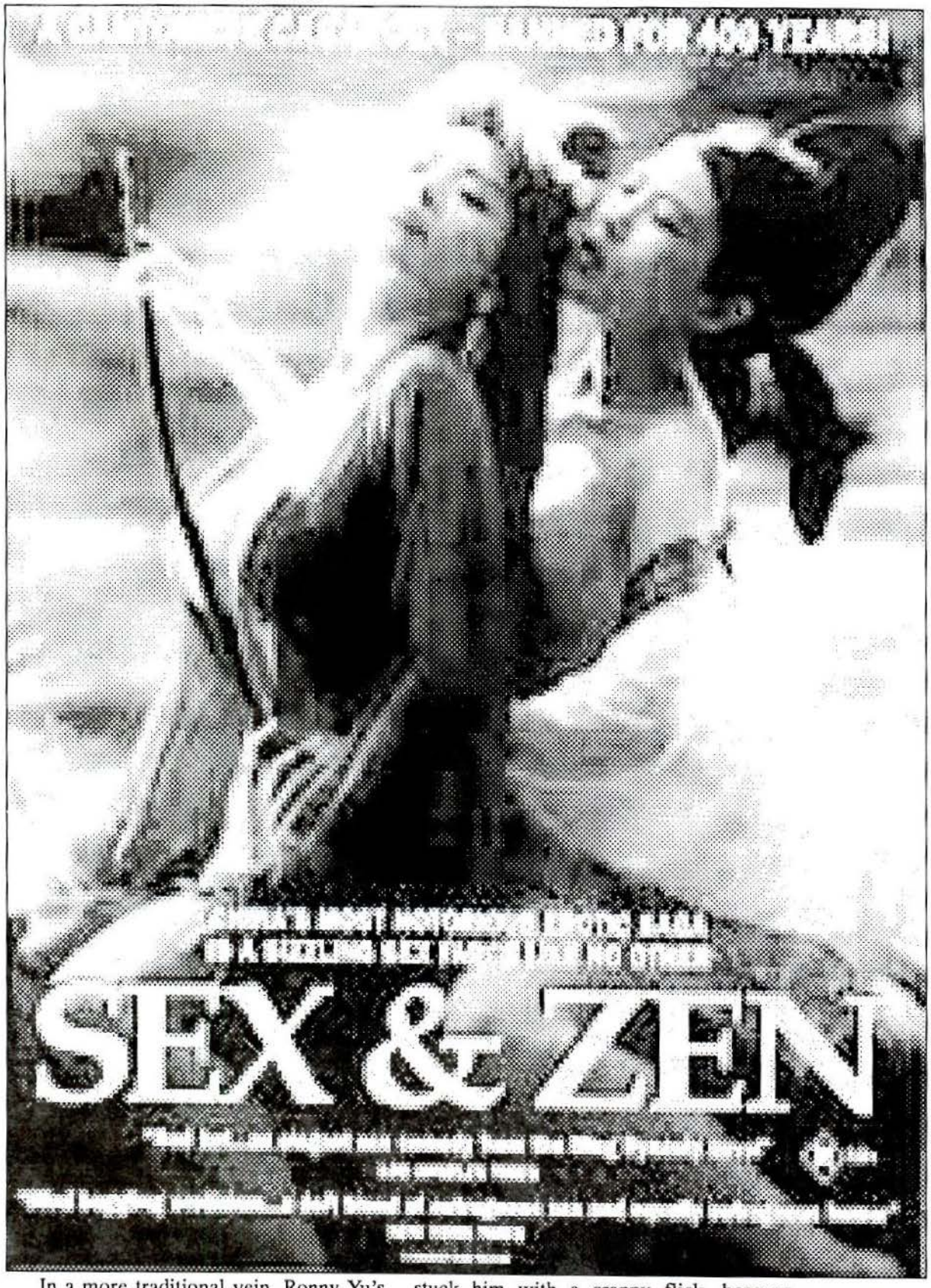
The film opens with a brash youngster arguing with a monk about the value of chastity: "Why should I not indulge my sexual desires to the fullest? Why should I not seduce as many women as I like?" he asks, then heads off to fulfill his dreams in the big city.

That doesn't sound so bad, but *wow*! There's a lot of nasty sex in this movie, much of which I could not watch because it was extremely sexual.

Our hero, played by Lawrence Ng, learns that he is extremely under-endowed, something I never really wanted to know in the first place. So, like every other under-endowed man in the world, he goes to a doctor who specializes in transplanting horse penises onto the bodies of under-endowed men like himself (but *not like me!*).

Well, it works, but, as usual, he can only achieve an erection when he sees the color red. There is also some kung-fu, two ladies learn a new use for a flute and the main character's wife pulls a David Copperfield and manages to write a whole letter *without using her hands*! Wow, is there a lot of sex, just like in real life. Good movie, though.

(top left) Hop on board the *Chungking Express*.
(above) Gee, *The Bride with White Hair* smalls terrfic.



In a more traditional vein, Ronny Yu's swordfighting epic ***The Bride with White Hair*** (1993, Tai Seng) tells the sad tale of love between a brash young warrior and a girl (once again, Brigitte Lin) raised by wolves, but now a member of an evil clan led by demonic Siamese twins who can use her whip to literally cut a man in half.

The scenery is awesome, and the sad tale is sometimes cheesy, sometimes good, but always bloody and fun. Add a quality sex scene and lots of toilet paper stuff flying around, and we've got a winner on our hands.

Yu, who directed the kung-fu space kangaroo film *Warriors of Virtue*, helmed this one, and it's easy to see why the studios stuck him with a crappy flick, because *Bride* is actually pretty good (see last issue's HKE for more on the Hollywood conspiracy). There's a sequel, too, but I'm broke and haven't been able to find it.

Jackie Chan rounds out this St. Valentine's Day gala with a more traditional love story of a man who can't get enough of that liquor.

Drunken Master (1978, various cheap labels) is one of the first movies Jackie directed himself, and his one-of-a-kind style really comes through, despite crappy production values and terrible subtitles. Jackie plays Chinese folk hero Wong Fei Hong, a brash young man eager to kick ass with his strong kung-fu.

His brashness eventually leads to misadventure, however, and he's sent to an old alcoholic who teaches him the eight styles of drunken kung-fu, which kicks much ass and is very strong. After some *Karate Kid*-type training and much abuse of wine and spirits, the plot reappears and Jackie kicks ass. Way cool.

In the more recent ***Drunken Master II*** (1994, Tai Seng), Jackie reprises his role as a teenager, which is okay, except that his father (played by Ti Lung of John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*) and his stepmother (Anita Mui from *Operation Condor*) look to be the same age as him. But, as Kenny from that Japanese *Planet of the Apes* rip-off said, I don't care!

As the film opens, I am disconcerted. There is a decent plot about people stealing valuable Chinese artifacts, but more importantly, Jackie's dad won't let him drink! How can he use his strong kung-fu without liquor to gird his loins? Well, of course his stepmother is an enabler, giving him all the booze he can handle, letting him kick much booty in the process.

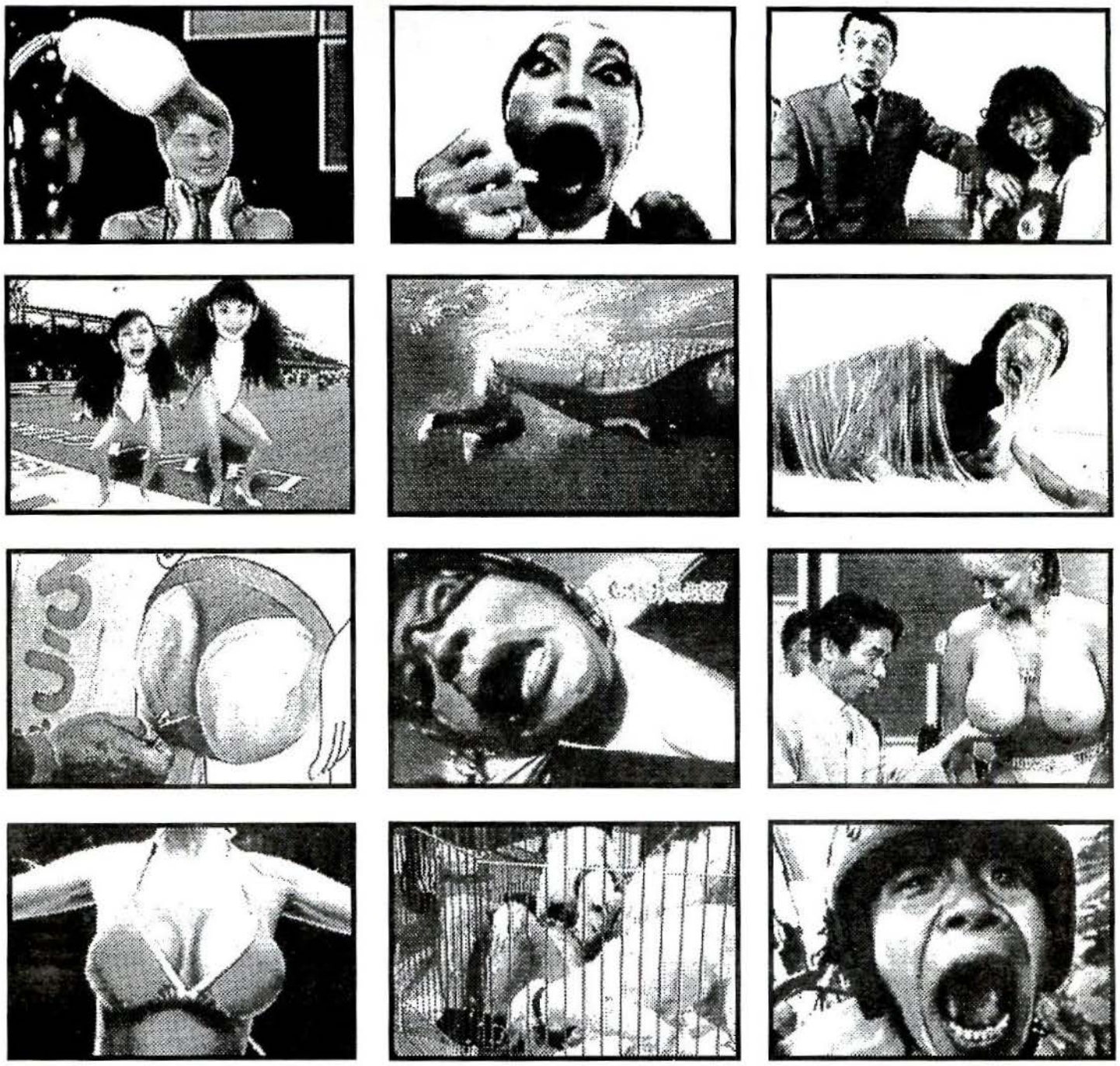
The whole thing ends up with one of the greatest set pieces in HK history: a great brawl in the middle of an iron foundry that has Jackie breathing fire and jumping into a pile of hot coals. It is truly awesome.

Well, that about says it for love, Hong Kong style.

I do, however, need some assistance. To keep this column going, I need to watch Hong Kong movies, of which I am running out. If anyone can be of kind assistance, please e-mail me by all means at *ryun1@aol.com*. I am especially looking for *Mr. Vampire* and other horror/kung fu flicks.

Well, that's it. But I'll be back, when the **HITCH** is new, and I'll have more HK movies for you. You'll have things you want to read about. I will, too.

looking for something different?



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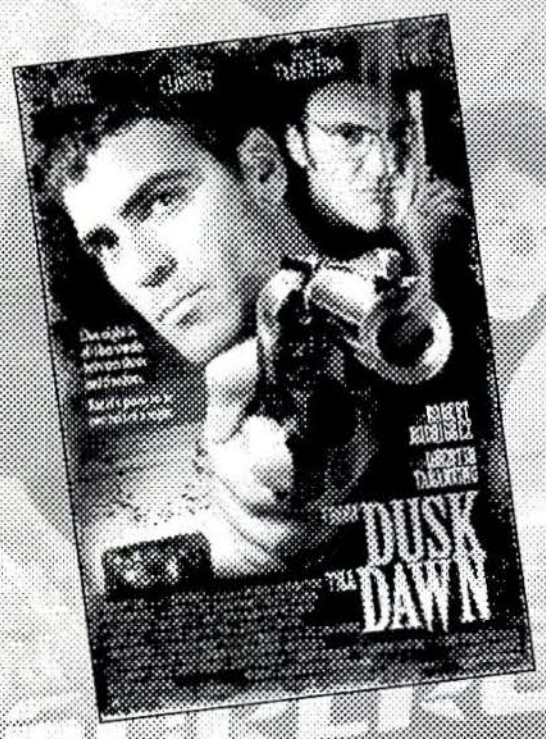

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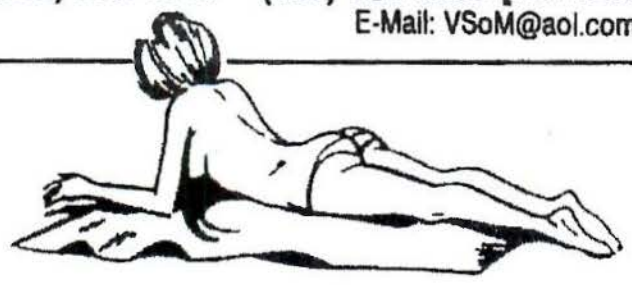

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To all residents of Viola Courts 19 Nov 97. DUMPTSTER MATH 101

As a resident here since 1990, I have a concern about our trash. We have occasionally had the the overflowing dumpster problem but it seems it has become a weekly problem over the last three months.

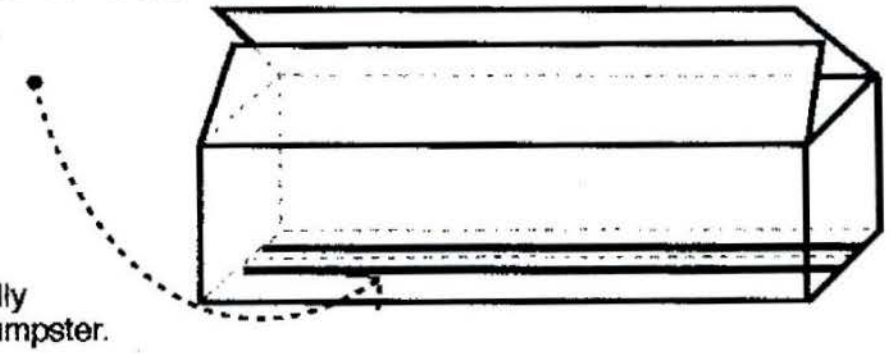
If you noticed on Monday morning, our dumpster was beginning to overflow and Monday afternoon it was only half full.

The difference has to do with me climbing into the dumpster to remove three very large boxes which took up 50% of the space within our trash receptacle.

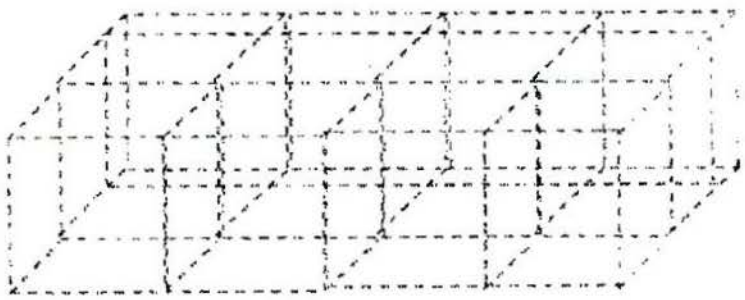
In spite of what you may think happens when trash is thrown in on top of these boxes, they hold their original shape and take up exactly the same amount of cubic space within the dumpster unless they are broken down.

Directions to break down *

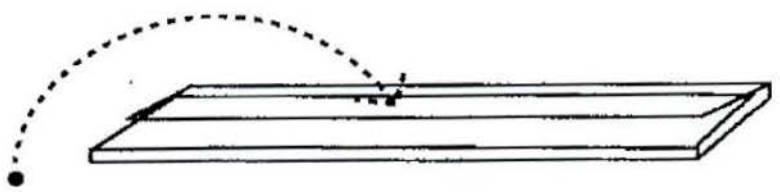
1. On bottom of box cut tape down center.
2. Turn box on side where it can be easily flattened .
3. Place box vertically along inside of dumpster.



box **before** breaking down = **10 cubic feet**



visual view of **space consumed** by box above = **10 cubic feet**



same box **after** breaking down **space consumed = 1 cubic foot**

Dumpster Math Problem

If each of the 18 residents of an unnamed condo complex placed one box, the size of the box above, in the dumpster on Thursday, how many cubic feet will be left over for trash when the dumpster guy comes the following Wednesday?

☐ cubic feet

Dumpster Facts

- **84** total cubic feet is available in the dumpster when empty
- **D**umpster is emptied once a week
- **I**t is emptied every Wednesday

This is my suggestion to begin to solve the problem and I don't mind doing it... but I do mind crawling in the dumpster.
You may have ideas of you own about this or your own concerns about this or other situations in the building. If so,you can talk to Scott or me.

Beth Weaver Yager # 302 824.3879

My proposal is this:

All boxes **larger** than a **shoe box** will be placed to **left** of the dumpster and **I will break them down.** *

This suggestion has been approved by Scott Jones, our building manager